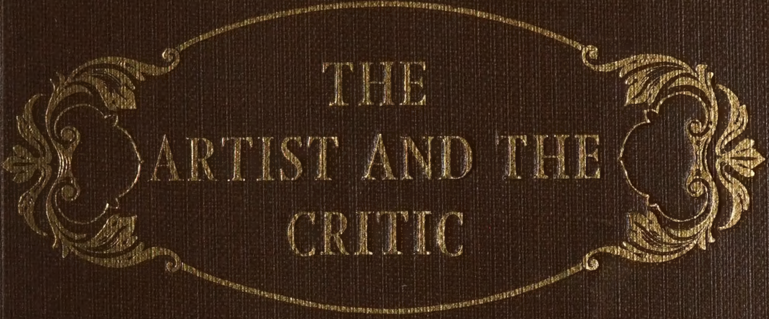

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THE ARTIST AND THE CRITIC

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

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TO MY FRIENDS
OF THE
AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF THE
UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
MONTREAL, QUEBEC

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A WORD WITH THE READER

For a number of years I have been at work on the problems suggested by the relations of the mind whose fundamental bent is artistic and the mind whose defining quality is critical. The Samuel Harris Lectureship on Literature and Life has given me a happy opportunity to organize my thinking in these respects and to present the result first at Bangor Theological Seminary and then in printed form to the larger public. That the problems lifted have to do with the very structure of life as well as with the substance of letters I am sure. As to the value of the solutions suggested on many a page the reader himself must decide. I have allowed myself ample liberty to follow my own taste in referring to works which are great and works which are small as they could be made of service in illustrating my theme.

And now—having found in Dante that synthesis of the spirit of the critic and the spirit of the artist to which the whole world of literature must move, I venture to close this prefatory note with the words with which Boccaccio brought to an end the earliest life of the great Florentine poet:

"My little bark is come to the port whither it directed its prow on leaving the opposite shore. Although its voyage has been short, and the sea it has plowed tranquil and not deep, none the less, since it has come without hindrance, thanks are due to Him who has lent a fair wind to its sails, to whom with all the humility, all the devotion, all the affection that I can command, I render not such thanks as are fitting, but such as I can give, blessing his name and his might for ever and ever."

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH.

Montreal, Quebec.

LECTURE I

THE GENIUS OF THE ARTIST

THE artist is a strange creature. Out of the intangible materials of the imagination he creates men and women and institutions and empires. He thrusts himself into a life which has been. He enters into a life which is yet to be. He becomes part of such a life as never has been on sea or land. He dramatizes this world of his imagination, and then by some fine magic he captures it in a net of words. Or he tells its evasive story with the colors which he puts upon the canvas, or builds a palace of sound to tell the tale of his mental adventures in lovely music. He draws from solid stone the powerful figures of his fancy, or he erects buildings which tell the secrets of the spirit of man even while their walls shelter busy human activities. With a dream he goes forth to conquer a crown. In a garret he hitches his imagination to a star. He transcends limitations of time and space and circumstance. He surveys everything, and he is monarch of all that he surveys. In him the creative spirit lives, and it deals with materials as intangible as dreams and as actual as the hopes and ambitions of men. He is a god without omnipotence satisfying the creative impulse in an imaginary world. Then, driven by some inner influx of power, he turns the world of his dreams into the permanent forms of a subtly disciplined art. He finds escape from the limitations of environment at the very moment when he subjects himself to the limitations of art. So creative imagination and discipline meet and are joined in wedlock. From this union great poetry, great music, and great sculpture come forth to bless the life of men.

There is an artist sleeping in all of us. He waits to be called forth when our desires outrun our capacities and we take refuge in the world where we create in fancy the satisfaction which we cannot possess in fact. But the artist may prove a prophet. For what we do in the phantasy of the imagination we may one day in the world of action. And the artist in us is always ready to be an emancipator. He breaks the chains which bind us to our own personality. He calls from within the great works of art and invites us to enter that secret place whose magic key he holds. If there were no artist in us, we could never appreciate the work of the artists who have changed the face of the world. But the escape of day-dreams becomes the adventure of borrowing the wings of the imagination of other men. And so we go forth into a new and strange and beautiful world. The great artist knows how to plant seeds in the soil of every mind because instinctively he perceives that every mind has been fertilized by dreams which are the surest preparation for the appreciation of art.

His freedom is a glorious thing, and yet it is held under the stern restraints of laws with their own unbending severity and their own inevitable penalties. To feel the remorseless tenacity of the stubborn fact at the very moment when the creative imagination is in full and glorious flight is to be an artist who achieves a quality of finality and of deathless power. To treat the world of dreams not as an escape from reality, but as an honest and utterly candid interpretation of reality is to turn the dreams into such stuff as civilizations are made of. The artist has his own decalogue, and if he lives in a great realm of grace, it is a grace which is the transfiguration of law and not a substitute for the sanctions of the stern daughter of the voice of God. Thus it comes about that at the very moment when great art transcends the limitations of the individual life and enlarges its boundaries, it opens the way to a noble fulfillment in the world of facts through the impulses which are released in the world of fancy.

But the defining matter in the genius of the artist is the action of that creative energy which dominates the materials of the imagination. Mr. Arthur Clutton-Brock has observed with genuine insight that when you study the influences which played upon a great artist, you do not suppose that he is made by them. "The interest lies in what he made of them, not in what they made of him." This accounts for the exhaustless sense of exhilaration which belongs to the supreme works of art. It is as if you had come upon a god at the moment when he was making a world and had felt the hot breath of his creative energy upon your face. There is a kind of vicarious happiness about all this, as if somehow you have been made a partner in great achievements. For a golden moment you sit on a throne beside an august authority whose fiats control far-lying regions. A sense of release and fulfillment comes to you. And you return to the simple activities of common days with the happy memory of the light never seen on sea or land.

That great master of tragic art in the fifth-century Athens, Euripides, may be taken as a curiously vital illustration of the genius of the artist at work in the world. If we can see his mind at work and can feel the quality of his personality in action, we will come to an intimate apprehension of the quality of the artist and of the types of experience and action which condition his achievement.

In fifth-century Athens there had

been achieved a finesse of sophistication and an urbane civility, with a delicacy of perception and a poise and precision of taste such as the world had never known. And almost immediately back of this there was a rude and even cruel barbarity whose untamed energy was likely to flash through the graceful and urbane loveliness of the Attic life in the most disconcerting fashion. Raw materials of unbelievable roughness and crudeness had been built into a structure of the most subtly integrated harmony. The Athenian mind of the fifth century was never baffled by that which contradicted its own exquisite and restrained taste. Without a shade of dishonesty—for the Attic mind saw things as they were and not as the eye liked the look—all the elements which in their individual quality contradicted the very idea of harmony were united in such a fashion as to suggest a curious finality of integrated loveliness. Just as the Athenian democracy rested upon the anomalous foundations of slavery, so the very quality of subtle harmony which was central in Attic culture was made of elements which contradicted its own character. Fifth-century Athens had become possessed of no end of sanctions of stern and commanding definiteness. They seem miraculous when we see them against the background of earlier Greek life and of the Greek religion. It is as if a clear and cool and critical intelligence had swept in triumph through the embattled ranks of hoary prejudices and brutal customs to an achievement which contradicted the very quality of past experience. The serene and passionless perfection of the greatest Greek works of art represents a spirit which has defied and mastered the past rather than a spirit which has fulfilled it. Perhaps every Augustan age must so transcend the life in which it comes to flower that in effect it seems to contradict it. The perfect grace of Greek speech tends to hide the implicit contradictions even in Homer. And in Æschylus and Sophocles the great sanctions bend old tales to their own high purposes. At great moments the unity in the mind of the artist in Attica actually succeeds in imposing itself upon its materials. This is done all the more easily because the Greek spirit as it came into consciousness all through the areas of Athenian life held in diffusion that which was found in essence in men of supreme genius. Fifth-century Athens had so apprehended the quality of a deep and passionate and yet still serenity that its own ideal sent rays of light back over more grim and primitive days. The gods of Olympus and the early heroes learned to move about in a style of grand and yet restrained distinction, of noble and grave simplicity. To believe in all this ideal of harmony so intensely that past and present and future were caught in the mastery of one regal urbanity of still and restrained beauty was to be a fifth-century Athenian.

We have already made it clear that there were hidden chambers into which you must not enter if you desired to keep the glorious and urbane illusions of fifth-century life. Euripides entered these chambers, and when he came forth from their dark recesses with a disconcerting frankness he discoursed on what he found there. With a kind of unabashed and terrific honesty whose conceptions were centered in speech having its own immortal beauty he told his tale. Athens was amazed and fascinated. Athens was angry yet astonishingly allured. Many people hated Euripides as men are not often hated. Many men thought his poems malignant because he made their beautiful illusions impossible. Yet they came to witness his plays. He spoke to that in them to which no other dramatist had spoken. Socrates, sitting among the spectators, knew that this mighty poet with the dauntless daring of his iconoclastic thoughts was fighting his battles. At last Athens was to give the deadly hemlock to one. And the other died in exile. In the meantime year after year the Socratic irony and the creative questioning of Euripides gave a quality to the life of Athens unique in the history of culture in the world. With clear enough insight the haughty and honest mind of Aristophanes saw in both the foe of that unquestioning acceptance of ancient sanctions upon which it seemed to him the continuance of that Athenian culture which he loved depended. Did anyone see that beyond the deadly questions of Socrates and the equally deadly honesty of Euripides there might lie a serene and free mastery of sanctions whose high vitality would give true unity to the life of man? Perhaps the lack of that insight is the most tragic feature in the tale of Athens. The tragedy of a vacuum is more deadly than the tragedy of a poison. You can find an antidote to a poison. Who has found a weapon with which to fight a vacuum?

The whole situation was more than a subject of analysis on the part of the keen mind of Euripides. He allowed all its aspects to capture his imagination. He allowed its tense and strange elements to seek out the secret places of his heart. His emotions played about the contradictions inherent in the life and thought of his time. And as he lived once again in the great old stories which were the inevitable subject of Greek tragedy, he saw them with new eyes and felt them with a new sort of passion. The questions lifted in his inquiring mind were not the subject for dialectical discussion. They flung themselves from the heart of passionate human experience. They were not so much questions asked by logic as questions asked by life itself. No doubt men had furtively and evasively asked these questions in the secret places of their own spirits. Euripides dauntlessly brought them full into the light and made them inevitable in the mind of that Athens which sat in the theater. They emerged with a strange and yet inevitable power from the very center of the lives which he portrayed. He lived over the old stories. He saw in them what nobody had seen before. He felt in them what nobody had ever felt before. Everything becomes intimate and personal in the plays of Euripides. Even inhuman creatures like Medea become strangely human. Your throat chokes with a sudden and incredible understanding as you see her maddened mind move toward its inhuman deeds. You do not merely read about Medea; for a dreadful and understanding moment you become Medea. The very palpitating passion of life becomes part of the material for the understanding of experience as you follow the quickened and creative mind of Euripides. It is as if for the time you have become a great and friendly god with understanding sympathy generous enough and penetrating enough to follow the contradictory ways of passion and pain and ambition and fear, seeing what each experience means in its moment of authentic power and seeing equally well what the opposite experience means at a similar moment. This at all events Euripides did. And this in the most astonishing fashion he enables you to do in his great times of achievement, and this he approximates again and again on levels not quite so high.

In *Electra* you confront a situation

only to be made human by the highest dramatic genius. Here you have a daughter whose life is darkened by one terrible cloud. Her mother, Clytæmnestra, has murdered her father, Agamemnon, and has become the wife of Ægisthus, the dastardly lover with whom she plotted the murder. Fearful of the daughter Electra, they have degraded her by an alliance with a lowly man of the soil. To open the door and take you within the life of Electra, where the corrosive poison of all her wrongs and the memory of the dark deeds of her mother and her paramour have been doing their deadly work year after year; to find a sad and solemn sanctuary of pain in that embittered spirit, and to make you see the flames dart about her mind as she dreams of revenge; to do all this so that all the while she is human and possesses a power to win your regard; to make the grim and lonely environment a part of the tragedy, and the more grim and lonely heart the tragedy itself, is work for an artist capable of the supreme unselfishness of forgetting himself in his characters. But in the same play to bring forth the guilty mother and in the very hour of death by a sudden flash of light to make her pitiable, to give her the power to grip your heart with her last cry, is to reach heights of creative power and depths of human understanding before which we stand in a kind of subdued silence. It is so easy to make characters appealing by subtle bits of deception, by letting the light fall falsely by hiding part of the truth, by overemphasis and skillful appeal to prejudice. But to tell the whole truth about the most various types and to leave you understanding the pathos of the human story even when you must condemn, to create in your mind the elevation of a pity which is the creation of complete understanding and not of false sentiment, is to work with the materials of human life as a more understanding god than ever walked on Olympus might desire to deal with the destinies of men. Our principles are all the while steeling our hearts. Or our hearts are stealing away our principles. To hold tenaciously to both and in the light of both to see the world, is to begin to enter into the secret of Euripides.

The fashion in which an artist in the full control of the creative passion and at the same time himself fully controlling his materials can enter into the manifold aspects of a situation is seen strikingly in *Iphigenia in Aulis.* On the one hand there are the assembled hosts under the leadership of Agamemnon ready for the great adventure, and waiting with a kind of armed and passionate impatience for that human sacrifice which they believe is necessary to secure the victorious end of their endeavor. On the other there are the young and wide-eyed Iphigenia and her mother, Clytæmnestra, coming, as they believe, to find the brave Achilles, the bridegroom of the lovely girl. And caught in this tragic situation is the perplexed and baffled Agamemnon, with the father and the leader of armies fighting in his heart. Then there is the confused and angry Achilles, bitterly feeling that he is being made a tool in a situation which tugs fiercely at his chivalrous spirit. There is Menelaus, the brother of Agamemnon, about whose personality you feel an unpleasant slippery quality. All these people you see moving about. You hear them speak. And once and again the miracle is wrought and you find yourself within their torn and striving spirits looking out upon life as they must have looked forth when caught in the clutches of tragic circumstance. In some subtle way you find that you are not a judge weighing the evidence for or against each character. You are a master of understanding whose business it is to comprehend the very quality of the experience which comes to each character. And your judicial estimate when it is reached at last is based upon this profound adventure in understanding. When Iphigenia rises to her great height of self-sacrifice, the whole grim and cruel business becomes suffused with a quality of spiritual radiance. You have made your own the quality of an ancient experience and you have seen what spiritual victory can be extorted from ways of blightingly cruel superstition.

All this does not mean that Euripides lacks in the power of making a very searching analysis of the motives of his characters. If he comprehends what may be said for them—if he knows what they would say for themselves if they were skillful enough in their thoughts and persuasive enough in their speech—he also knows what can be said against them.

Friendly, as he obviously is, toward Admetus in that great play *Alcestis,* there is something fairly merciless in the light which falls—a flash here, a flash there—at last a veritable searchlight of honest investigation upon the motives which lie hidden in his heart.

Admetus is a good and friendly man who confronts a situation which might well be too much for a greater man than he. On his own level he is an ideal host and friend. But suddenly meeting a supreme moment, he fails to see its meaning until the moment is past. He is immortal if only someone will die for him. Only his serenely noble wife, Alcestis, is willing to make the sacrifice. His heart is broken at the thought. He has lovely words to say to her. He does everything except refuse to allow her to die for him. With all her love she cannot quite hide from herself the core of selfishness in his heart, though she has no word to tell the tale of what she sees. His old father, however, is frank enough—the old father who is not willing to die for his son, but sees clearly the quality of a young man who is willing to allow his wife to die for him. And when the two face each other, the son scornfully analyzing the moral weakness of his father, the father bitterly portraying the selfishness of the son, you have one of the most unlovely and revealing scenes you are likely to come upon in Greek tragedy.

The story of the good friend Hercules and his unhappily timed festivity, of his discovering the true nature of the grief whose subtle pressure he feels all about him, of his conquering death itself and bringing Alcestis back, of Admetus' restoration to a level of life where his wholesome ordinary virtues of comradeship and hospitality will shine, has something almost tender in its quality of human friendliness. Admetus is a classic type of the good man who in a tragic hour of high demand looks into his own soul and discovers there what he had never expected to see. And in passing we may remark that nobody had seen in Admetus what this play reveals until the powerful eyes of Euripides were turned upon him.

It is not too much to say that Euripides literally recreates these ancient stories. To hear a tale you have known from childhood and suddenly to discover that you have never known it at all is an amazing experience. And just this experience Euripides gave to Athens in tragedy after tragedy. The ancient characters ceased to be august figures of an almost mythical past. You came to know them as you knew the lads with whom you wrestled. You saw the hot blood mount in their cheeks. You felt the very quiver of their nerves. Your own hand touched their living flesh.

Euripides was born when Athens was the proud defender of the liberties of Greece. There was a certain moral magnificence about the Attic mind in his boyhood. A great occasion had been met in fully adequate fashion, and a kind of singing vitality entered into the mind of Greece as a result of it. You feel the quality of it as you follow the movement of *The Suppliants.* You have already participated in the tense and terrible experiences related in *The Phœnician Damsels,* in which men are caught in the coils of dark and sinister circumstance and out of it all come bitter and dastardly deeds. Thebes writhes in pain as a kind of moral poison circulates in its blood. In *The Suppliants* an appeal is made to Theseus, king of Athens, by the Argive Matrons on behalf of their slain and unburied sons. There is a proud sense that Athens holds a high place as arbiter of justice, that the Athenians are those who are willing to take great risks at the behest of those laws which are their true rulers. There is a beautiful and patriotic pride in Athens as the city which can be trusted to uphold those sanctions which in turn sustain the welfare of men.

But, as Gilbert Murray has pointed out in powerful sentences, Euripides lived to see Athens lose its proud position as the defender of Greece, in order to achieve an imperial control over the Greek states, which asserted its own stern sway, with no regard for the liberties of men or the justice which every man and every city has a right to claim. Thucydides, it is clear, was aware of what it meant to live in an imperial city which had allowed something priceless to perish from its life.

And the clear-eyed Euripides, living through these days, entered deeply into tragic meanings about the roots of the motives of men and nations which even he had hardly penetrated before. He flung the terrible pictures and the terrible words of *The Trojan Women* into the mind of Athens in the very days when the imperial fever had swept from men's minds all thought of restraint. The Trojan war had been a glorious and romantic memory. The beauty of Helen had hung like a radiance about the imaginations of men. The martial exploits of the Trojan war were an essential part of the very life of the spirit of Greece. But with a courage which fairly startles us Euripides turns our eyes upon the conquered Troy, whose buildings burn while its noblest women crouch together in the shadows waiting to be carried off into slavery. The whole fashion in which war comes like a terrible rotting process into the life of men is mercilessly depicted. You see, as no one had seen before Euripides, what war means to the womanhood of a conquered city. Andromache takes momentary comfort in the thought of the little son of Hector. But the child of the great warrior of Troy is torn from her arms and cast from the walls of the city. The conquering Greeks are afraid of a baby! The stately Cassandra is torn from priestly tasks, that her beauty may please Agamemnon, hot with a desire to possess some human loveliness as the loot of war. How drab and sordid it all is! Lust and murderous fear stalk out of the Greek camp, and the Trojan women watch their city burn. This is the glory and this is the romance of war. The ghostly women who come to life from an ancient tragedy are somehow flesh and blood, and all the civilization which has war as its key is seen with a new and terrible understanding.

I suppose it was when he dared to say such things as these in the passionate clarity of great drama that Euripides lost Athens. The mad city had no place for his clear and understanding sanity. When a whole city is insane with the lust of war the sane man must be called mad if the city is to keep its belief in its own sanity. In any event that free and exploring mind bringing to light questions men scarcely dared to ask in the dark, was looked upon with increasing distrust and anger. To cause such questions to rise out of the very heart of a drama which captured your imagination and engraved itself upon your memory so that you could not forget it was a crime which Athens could scarcely forgive.

This habit of making every aspect of an experience dramatically vivid to the imagination was surely a dangerous as well as a glorious one. It meant seeing Athens in a light which might well turn Athenians sullen with anger. It also meant seeing religion in a fashion which was equally disconcerting. Around every corner of the writing of Euripides you are seeing some deity in an unfavorable light. The old stories of the Greek religion were never made for this sort of critical inspection.

The whole plot of *Ion* is based upon a flaming passion of Apollo in which that bright and glorious god might have been any gay and hot-blooded young libertine. This shamefaced Apollo, trying to bring some sort of good result out of his bit of careless lawlessness and at the crisis of the play keeping out of sight and trusting the whole matter to that grave and great goddess his sister, shows us aspects of the Greek religion which the devotee might well like to keep covered up. *Hercules Distracted* reveals a great and mighty hero driven to deeds of intolerable terror because deities on Olympus have sent a madness to cloud his brain and make his hand terrible. But how does the Queen of Olympus emerge from such episodes? You can scarcely deny that a deity so described is no better than she ought to be. Very subtly is the problem of the relation of the gods to men attacked in that strange play *Hippolytus.* Here the very chaste self-control of a splendid youth makes foes for him upon Olympus. The deity of hot and vivid passion whom he repudiates encompasses his ruin. At least you cry in the midst of the agony of it all—there is one chaste goddess who must be his friend, for he has been her true worshiper. And as he dies Artemis comes to comfort him. But as the death sweat comes upon his face and the moment of the death rattle in his throat approaches she hurries away. No dweller on Olympus can be polluted by such sights. So Hippolytus is left to die deserted by the very goddess for whom he has given his life.

As you see her go you think suddenly of a green hill far away and of a Deity whose outstretched arms upon the cross sought to experience the utmost pain of human suffering and death. And as you look upon the God upon the cross you know why the Greek religion died and Christianity lived. You wonder what Euripides would have done with a Deity who was willing to suffer for men.

As it was he was restive enough with the questions he felt he must ask and the experiences he felt he must portray. Sometimes he denies outright that the stories which make great gods do evil things are true. But he cannot quite persist in the denial. There is one strange line in *Hippolytus* about looking for other gods. Often he portrays the god emerging at a crisis for the helping of men. It is clear enough how hungry he was for the satisfaction which would have come with a religion whose deity made the welfare of men his constant purpose. The famous *deus ex machina,* so often coming in the plays of Euripides, as when Athena appears in *Iphigenia in Taurus,* or as Castor and Pollux appear in *Helen,* represents that sense that life is a part of larger areas of reality, and that when man's best endeavor fails there is a word from beyond the silence. Yet doubts will not down. Too many deities with glittering vices moved all about the mind of Euripides. It is the fine achievement of his art that doubt and faith, question and answer, hesitation and the moment of high apprehension all find dramatic expression. This is not argument. It is passionate and sincere experience in a baffling world.

Perhaps the strangest and the most subtle expression of Euripides' experience with the Greek religion is found in the *Bacchanals.* In exile far from the Athens he loves, the old ways and the old tales are much in his mind. Perhaps the glow of distance and golden memory does its own work. Perhaps he thinks more fundamentally, all the while keeping hold of his honesty.

The tale of the king who failed in his fight with Dionysus touches all sorts of vague and evasive and amazing things in our minds and hearts. You see how cruel the Dionysian ecstasy can be. The mad mother, who unknowing holds in triumph the head of the son she has slain, tells that terrible tale. But you are made to feel that this is not all the story. The man who is so afraid of anarchy that he shuts out passion cuts a sad figure. Purity itself is seen in one terrible moment with prurient eye as Pentheus tries to spy upon the mysteries of the devotees of Dionysus. There must be a creative and healing work which noble passion does among men and women. Even wild, hot tales of lawless cruelty are trying to bear witness to something which, if you could once understand and use it nobly, has a place in this marvelous and baffling experience of life. So Euripides speaks his last word, trying loyally to express whatever of truth and beauty may lie even among exotic things, and all the while telling the bitter truth about the fruits which grow in the gardens where there have been planted the seeds of passionate desire.

This, then, is the genius of the artist —when he is a great artist—to let all the winds of experience flow upon him, and to turn these winds into the deathless harmonies of a music which captures the very quality of every sort of experience. Here thought itself becomes poetry, and the questions life asks turn into a beauty of deep and lovely words, in which the dignity of the spirit which can ask these questions is perpetually enshrined. Euripides exposed the sensitive surface of his life to all that contemporary experience brought to him. Fifth-century Athens cannot die while the plays of Euripides live. Men and women, gods and goddesses, come walking right into our minds from the mind of Euripides. The old life lives again. The old thoughts dramatize themselves in our minds. The old passions beat with ceaseless energy in our hearts. The old questions ask themselves again. The old deeds become our own. The art of Euripides has expanded our horizons so that experiences we could never have understood without him have come within the range of our vision. He has captured in his imagination the forms of a passing world and has made them permanent, held in the grasp of his magic sentences. He has given us new worlds in which our minds may dwell. And, best of all, he has given us an assured sense of that quality of the creative imagination which enables us to transcend the limits of our personal lives. If there is to be such a thing as a society, we must be able to escape from ourselves into the lives of others. Artists like Euripides convince us that we can look out upon the world through eyes other than our own.

The great artist defies time. The great artist defies space. And all this he does, we can see clearly, because God has put eternity in his heart.

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LECTURE II

THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ARTIST

THE artist is a man of many eyes. Indeed, before he has finished his work he has looked out upon the world with all the sorts of eyes there are, and all the sorts of eyes there have been, and some of the sorts of eyes which are yet to be. So his perspective comes to be as vast and wide-reaching as the world of experience which may be seen. He is all the while living again in all sorts of other lives. He is in aim, at least, the embodiment of the total bulk of experience which has befallen humanity.

Of course a particular artist rarely attempts so colossal an achievement. Balzac does lift his eyes to some such height in the *Comédie Humaine,* but it is really the composite artist—the artist made up of all the artists—who attempts to incorporate the whole body of human experience in delectable and permanent forms. Each particular artist makes his own a bit of territory and does his share of the common task. Miss Austen—that Shakespeare in a thimble—deals with a small area, but her eyes see very clearly and her pen records very potently. Of course it comes to be a good deal more than sight. It includes insight. And then it embodies the apprehension of all those matters of the emotions and the will and the intellect which make up so important and distinguishing a part of the actual experience of life. We must include not only Wordsworth's inner eye, but all sorts of inner eyes and their activity when we consider the perspective of the artist. "My Task," declared Ibsen, "has been the description of humanity." This description must include the inner life as well as the outer activity. To take a photograph of the inner life of a man or an age is a difficult and daring achievement. Really, it must be a moving picture, for life is dynamic and not static. So the artist confronts a task manifold and perhaps confusing in its aspects. For that very reason it is one of the most alluring tasks in all the world.

I

Sometimes the artist lives again the life represented by other men's manners. Anthony Trollope has a way of coming back after we have made up our minds that we are through with him. And he comes back because he reflected the manners of a period in a singularly vital fashion. Barsetshire is not a region never beheld from sea or perceived on land. It is a part of England of which Trollope is said to have made a map, and the reader is inclined to feel that he could make such a map if he had the mind to. (With apologies to Charles Lamb!) You see comedy and tragedy and passion and pain come within your ken. But though you see clearly it is as though you observed these things through a reversed telescope. You observe with a certain tranquillity the most intense passions. It is not the pathos of distance but the gentle quiet which the sense of distance gives. You watch the ways of Archdeacon Grantly and Mrs. Proudie, and Doctor Thorne and all the others almost as you might watch the behavior of busy ants under a powerful magnifying glass. The ways of men are observed with patience and understanding and kindly sympathy. Even the villain occasionally tugs at your heart. Sowerby and Crosbie are kept human. Through their manners these people reveal a good deal. In the background there is the lonely life of the country and there are the busy ways of London. You have known these men and women as you might have known them had you been a civil servant in the same office or lived in a near-by country estate. Their reserves are the reserves of life itself. Yet you manage rather often to pass by the reserves. You know these characters of Trollope rather better than you know your neighbors. And in knowing them you know all of humanity better.

Sometimes the artist captures the quality of the life of a period or a movement or even of a nation. Charles Reade managed to pack a good deal of the Middle Ages into *The Cloister and the Hearth.* But you meet the period not as a series of facts but as a succession of experiences. This tale of the father of Erasmus gives you a sort of vicarious memory. You can see yourself passing through these adventures. You can even hear your own mind thinking these thoughts. These people were old companions of yours, and your own life is subtly different because of all this experience. It was a jolly friend of yours who cried out as you met life fairly together, *"Courage, mon camarade, le diable est mort!"* and something of a youth which never was yours comes back as if it has been your own as you read the tale. But most important of all, the eyes of the age become your eyes, and the thoughts of the age become your thoughts.

The inner piety which flowered at the heart of the Reformation in Germany is apprehended with singular felicity and interpreted with singular sympathy in Mrs. Charles' *Schonberg-Cotta Family.* The very music of the life of religion as the soul's apprehension of the friendly God sounds clearly and gladly in these pages. It is as if some dear old sixteenth-century friend of yours had put aside reserve and opened his heart to you. And that which you find within is very lovely and very rare. A very different type of spiritual experience connected with a very different type of movement finds a voice in Shorthouse' *John Inglesant.* Here at last the cavalier speaks for himself, and in his fashion of apprehending the inner and the outer meaning of life. The alleged plagiarisms of the author cannot rob his achievement of its own success. With something not unlike finality he follows the trail of that exotic spirit which finds God in beauty and expresses its devotion in distinguished ways of thought and feeling and action and worship. Its own superb heroisms are not less dramatic against a background of brilliant social life than those which are silhouetted against a more somber background. You do not forget the modishly groomed figure appearing like a social butterfly at a social function in Rome and risking his life for his principles at the moment when he seemed most a creature of polished and glittering surfaces. With an even surer touch and a cool detachment of distinguished phrase under which the fire burns, Walter Pater can make the worship which is the experience of beauty a thing which he offers to the reader as a priceless gift. Often his sentences are so delicate and so fine that you fear they will fall from your hands and break into fragments at your feet. You have a feeling that he could write of Marius the Epicurean as he did just because he was himself Marius the Epicurean.

It is a different enough world into which you walk as you follow the beckoning finger of Nathaniel Hawthorne—grimness, austerity, the passion of the body and the subtler passion of the spirit beating against the granite of New England character. And the strange granite of New England's Calvinism becomes very vivid in your imagination as you walk through the pages of his books. The ages, like the waters of a great river, have a way of rising to overflow the banks of a particular period. Very often the passions and the desires of centuries which had passed from men's thought broke forth from some hidden depths with strange fierceness of energy in the New England which Hawthorne knew. And nature, the deeply mysterious mother, had a way of speaking in a voice of her own. *The Scarlet Letter* gives you some feeling of all this. And Hawthorne is haunted, not to say baffled, by the pursuing knowledge of it. Much more enigmatically, and with what at times comes to be a finished quality of achievement, Emily Dickinson expresses the secrets of the New England spirit as unbelievable winds from incredible lands blow upon it. Emily Dickinson can be a hermit because she has the world in her mind. She can be a recluse because the revealing spirits of the ages come and go in her heart. There is at times an almost terrible pride in her own remote and lonely understanding. And at times there is an almost reckless gayety as she flies about among the precipitous cliffs of the world of her imagination. She cannot forget that she is a Puritan. She will not surrender when her Puritanism would become a master with a whip ready to beat her spirit into subjection. She cannot—she would not ignore God. But she makes him over again in the magic of her own subtle bafflingly honest phantasy. She tells most when she seems to tell least. And with all her proud exclusiveness she gives you an opportunity to know her strange and subtle and evasive spirit as you never knew your dearest friend.

The emancipation from time and space which the artist gives us is really through the control of the meaning of particular periods in time and particular places about the world. You can walk all about the fourteenth-century England with Dan Chaucer, feeling oddly at home with the pilgrims who tell the Canterbury Tales. You can enter into the forces which made England England as you follow Shakespeare in the ways of those plays in which the history of one glorious little island becomes luminous and revealing at his touch. And as you stretch the muscles of your imagination for these journeys, all the while you are making the world in quite a new sense your own.

II

Sometimes the artist makes it

possible for us to live again in the life of other minds. Amiel's *Journal* is the autobiography of a mind. It is a mind of singular subtlety and yet a mind with an odd firm power of its own. This man was so busy understanding life that he had no time to live; or, rather, his life itself was an adventure in understanding. His instruments of analysis are of a delicacy and a microscopic precision which surprise the reader as much by the finesse as by the accuracy of the writer's mind. Such work was done only by a mind which had created for itself an atmosphere in which certain thoughts could germinate and grow. It would not be fair to call it the temperature of a hothouse. The subtle debilitating quality of a bit of the tropics in another zone would not express the quality of Amiel's mind. Rather he has captured a bit of rare mountain air and carried it off from the summit trailing memories of far clear vistas once seen through that translucent medium. It is evident at once that something happens to one's own mind as he thinks Amiel's thoughts after him. These ideas in solution in a mind of singular clarity become a part of one's own mental experience. It is as if each thought had become endowed with a personality of its own. What would have been a process of dialectic in a philosophy has become a social experience in the mind of an artist, when like guests at a brilliant reception thoughts come and go. They are groomed in their best. But it is best because it is most fitting and not because it is most gorgeous.

There are dramatic monologues from the pen of Robert Browning which are essentially mental adventures. No Victorian poet had such an art of thinking men's thoughts after them. Men like Bishop Blougram lived a life of the mind which was their real life. And as the Bishop quietly and with suave understanding of his own mind gives his *Apologia pro Vita Sua,* you see thought alive in the spirit of a man who responded with exquisite sensitiveness to the intellectual climate of his time. Ideas become the dramatis personæ in the vivid play which is the mental life of Bishop Blougram. They enter and play their parts and then retire from the stage. You say to yourself as you watch them that you scarcely knew that such ideas could be so alive. It is the artist who works the miracle. And as you watch the achievement you begin to wonder if any man is quite a thinker who is not something of an artist too. Cleon welcomes you to the interior of another mind. You feel its outreaches, its hesitations, its baffled grasp upon evasive aspects of experience. Thoughts themselves wear the livery of a particular culture and bend to the purposes of a particular type of mind. Easter Day has the same quick perception of the relation between ideas and their environment. You begin to feel the kinship of certain ideas and certain surroundings. You begin to have a new apprehension of the horticulture of thought.

Mr. W. C. Brownell, in a keenly analytic study, has reminded us of the part the mind plays in the novels of George Eliot. Ideas are always more passionate than passions with George Eliot; or, rather, by an odd process of sublimation ideas have taken the place of passions in her mind. Many people have gone to the writings of George Meredith because ideas with little lights inside are lying about all over his pages. Some readers will feel that the ideas get between them and the characters. Some will feel that the characters exist for the sake of the ideas.

The true apologists of Meredith will assert that the ideas express the very genius of the characters. Did someone say that George Meredith did not feel that he knew a man unless he could turn him into an epigram, and that one of his own characters was likely to feel that he had not mastered the meaning of an experience unless it could be suspended at the point of a paradox? If Diana has her moments of weakness, she does not lack in that perceptive intelligence which can make any situation the occasion of a phrase itself a work of art. And perhaps Meredith cared even more for intelligence than for character.

III

Sometimes—indeed very, very often—the emotions of men live in that world which the artist constructs. If Kepler cried, "O God, I think thy thoughts after thee," when he discovered the laws of planetary motion, the artist in many of his characteristic moods is ready to declare, "O man, I feel thy emotions after thee." The world of the emotions is a world of infinite variety and color, a world of fairly exhaustless and electrical energy. If a man could write a history of the dominant emotions which have appeared in the life of man, it would turn out to be a history of civilization. You have to strike a match to an idea and by some subtle process of conflagration turn it into an emotion before it becomes really powerful. The qualities of perception which detect the movement of the emotions—their strange and potent ebb and flow—are themselves of a curious refinement and delicacy, and the powers of expression which turn feelings into the channels of speech are of the highest order. Lyric poetry is one long endeavor to capture emotions and to hold them in a net of words. The *Spoon River Anthology* attempts to carve an emotion on each of a couple of hundred tombstones in an Illinois cemetery. And, rather astonishingly, often the attempt is successful. It is as if there had come from a forgotten grave a sudden spurt of flame. Sometimes it is as if ancient passions had recovered their dark-red glow, and sometimes—rather rarely—it is as if some passionate sense of spiritual beauty had bloomed like an Easter lily beside a moss-covered tombstone on a weed-covered grave.

The words which recreate an emotion are among the rarest and most radiant words in human speech. Sometimes, as in Shelley, the achievement becomes so bodiless a thing that the words seem to lose all the boundaries given by exact meaning and to melt into pure music. A dictionary would be an impertinence in the presence of that writing which wrests words from their lawful meaning and by some baffling necromancy made possible by sound and association erects a palace of feeling too tenuous for definition and yet so real that the sight of it brings to the heart a strange sadness all edged with the lights of a beauty which is ever inviting and ever receding. When Shelley really takes wings, you cannot follow him by any process of logical reasoning, but the pinions of the emotions can pursue him to almost incredible heights. Shelley will always baffle the formal logician. He has his own amazing way of using words to create songs without words. So, like his own "Skylark," he achieved that harmonious madness which caused the world to listen even as his proud and isolated spirit really desired.

Sometimes the emotion which is captured by the artist is held a prisoner in an ivory tower, and the tower itself has a rather definite place in the artistic product. Matthew Arnold took most of his emotions to ivory towers, and if the pathos of distance became a grave dignity in his writing, it did not lose its character. *Sohrab and Rustrum* is not without the thrust of passionate swords, but distance has put a golden haze upon the battle and has almost robbed of passion the hour of pain. Arnold's emotional gift, which, much as he would have disliked one's saying so, was a very distinctive and essential part of his poetry, consisted in real fact of a power to come flying on a cloud bright with the radiance of half-forgotten suns and to command the cloud to settle beyond an object which was to find its meaning in its new background. It was an atmosphere which he gave as a gift to Oxford when he wrote of its dreaming spires in pensive and distinguished speech. He was a dealer in atmospheres, and it is to his honor that he had an honest sense of the atmosphere which belonged to particular places and even to particular ideas. Even his thoughts seem each to be saying, "This is the air I can breathe" when he has come to distribute atmospheres among them; and this impeccable taste in adjusting a place or a thought to its proper atmosphere gives the reader a new sense of the subtlety of the emotions which cling about ideas like strange diaphanous garments. Only Arnold has an instinctive distaste for softness, and so the idea which wears a silken undergarment often wears an old and gleaming suit of armor as well. Just before he touches exquisite lips they have a way of becoming marble, and you forgive their coldness because of their beauty.

The very opposite of all this is experienced in the writing of Burns. The simple human emotions claim the right of way. Each finds the words which belong to it. But the words it rejects and the words it accepts are judged by its own nature. Nothing is allowed to get between you and the authentic quality of the experience. You are not taken to ivory towers. You are taken right into human hearts, and the very words in which a deep emotion first spoke its meaning in the life of the man to whom it came are securely captured before they run furtively away, and held to look at you with startled revealing eyes. You feel as if you have caught the emotion itself just as it was being born.

IV

The artist dwells amid the clash of wills. He is a perceiver of the deed back of the deed. He sees the moment when a volition achieves its inner deed before a single muscle has been commanded to obey its behests. And though emotions play all about, his keen eye moves through them to that act of decision in which the will asserts its sovereignty. Then when these inner decisions issue to do battle upon the field of life he watches the drama of action with a sound sense of the purposes which give steel to the arms of fighting men. Sometimes a very unpretentious book tells the story of the making of a will. Edna Lyall's *In Golden Days* lifts the curtain when a lad finds that he can and must decide, and then follow the far-reaching results of a real decision. Sometimes a very subtle and potent book tells the story of a spirit which never rose to the height of commanding decision. Sir James Barrie's *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grisel* tell the tale of a man who was always the victim of his environment. He never achieved a will which could impose its purpose upon his own chaotic emotions, upon his own temperamental actions, or upon the world without. He was always hypnotized by his environment and never achieved a life of his own. He was so busy being everybody he met that he never succeeded in being himself. Sir James Barrie is likely to be haunted by our incapacity to turn emotions into decisions. Dear Brutus plays with "might-have-beens" with an almost wistful sense of the wayward fashion of our vagrant desires.

But the artist understands very well that the will knows how to become a king in human life. Professor Henry van Dyke tried to suggest the tale of it in the varied collection of stories *The Ruling Passion.* In each the will crystallizes one central desire, and so the meaning of a particular life is brought into permanent form. The classic achievement in this sort is, of course, that of Christopher Marlowe.

In *Tamburlaine* it is the will bent upon power; in *Doctor Faustus* it is the will bent upon knowledge; in *The Jew of Malta* it is the will which is avarice—but in each case one dominating purpose commands a vital and vivid life.

The artist achieves a definite potency as he dramatizes the fashion in which all the varied elements of a life may be unified and made harmonious and effective as they are built into the passion of one central purpose. Edwin Muir says somewhere, "It takes two souls in one breast to make pessimism," but when the various souls in one breast are harmonized and made into one, you have not merely optimism, you have power. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is the story of the making of a great person. Jean Valjean is worse than a cipher at the beginning. He is charged with negative electricity. You watch him as through awakening and titanic struggle and desperate moral and spiritual adventure he achieves inner unity. Where there had been spasms of bitter hatred succeeded by hours of cold and terrible acquiescence, you have at last a great and good will dominating the life of a man. The book is more than a psychological study of the process of spiritual integration. It is a vicarious experience of that process in the mind of the author by the magic of an adequate artistry made real to the mind of the reader.

V

The study of the artist is often a very bloodthirsty place. All sorts of terrible deeds are associated with it. The walls retreat to make room for the invading spaces where great battles will be fought. The ocean rushes in that upon its restless waves ships may go out about the Seven Seas to carry the actions of the imagination to the ends of the earth.

Suns rise and set, centuries come and go, at the word of necromancy of the artist who holds all things under the power of his daring dreams. Sometimes intrigue and action and wild adventure move with a dramatic swiftness which fairly takes your breath away. The elder Dumas knew how to call the wild horses of heroic deeds. And at his word they galloped forth into the reader's mind. When you are with *The Count of Monte Cristo* or *The Three Musketeers* there are no deep and brooding silences. The music is alive with military fervor. And deeds of daring are themselves almost characters as they ride forth, their plumes waving proudly in the wind, their steeds stepping loftily, as they gallop into the land of high romance. You follow almost breathless.

But deeds themselves may be all involved in the intricate relationships of great days and great movements. Don

Byrne, in his *Crusade,* has a background full of the color and the tragedy of great enterprises and great passions. And there is action swift and unhesitating. But all the while a life is in process of receiving form by means of strong blows upon the anvil which is its spirit. At the very moment when swords are flashing and life is moving with swift intensity, you look through sudden openings into the hearts of those of whom this astonishing Irishman tells. Don Byrne's *Field of Honor* is an even more effective achievement in this same realm. The tapestry of the Napoleonic period is unrolled before your eyes. Old loves and hates, old nobilities and old tragic sordidness walk forth before you. You hear the hiss of long-dead serpents. How astonishingly alive these people are! And of two people you know almost more than you feel you have the right to apprehend. Action is the brilliant and transparent surface through which you look at the very realities of human character.

A brilliant process of action, through which you look upon the very structure of the universe itself, represents a terrifically daring adventure of the imagination and the craftsmanship of the artist. And it is precisely this sort of attempt and this sort of achievement which you find in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The stage is the world back of all worlds. The characters are the ultimate beings of the universe, and the curious human beings who begin the adventure of living on this fertile and astonishing earth. There is action over incredible areas of space. And all the while you are seeing beyond the actions the moral and spiritual structure of the universe itself. If this is philosophy, it is philosophy turned into drama. If this is systematic theology, it is systematic theology set to music. Action and thought are joined in indissoluble wedlock.

In a good many plays of Shakespeare the action is so engrossing that you scarcely realize the constant presence of clear and cogent and firmly controlled thought. In *Macbeth* and *King Lear* you do not have vivid and masterful actions recollected in tranquillity. You have passionate and tragic action thrown into your spirit at the very moment of its hot and terrible intensity. But for all the passion and swift movement of terrible events, the movement of thought is even more fundamental; it is characterized by greater celerity and it gives its own terrible and added poignancy to the tragedy. Macbeth is a mental experience as well as an experience of quickened nerves. King Lear carries the mind off to the most subtle apprehensions as to the elements of character. The plays do not wait for thought. They do not pause for meditation. Like sudden flashes of lightning on a summer night, the mind does its work in the midst of the tragedy.

VI

The fundamental experiences of life are meat and drink to the artist. Only by a curious vicarious gift this food and drink build up the substance of his art and not the organism of the artist. The menace which sometimes turns his craft to an unlovely trade is just the danger which lies in all vicarious experience. You can think so many contradictory thoughts that you have no thought. You can feel so many contradictory feelings that you have no feeling. In the end such a man has only an overwrought nervous system and no character.

But vicarious thinking and feeling and acting may be the experience of a sincere mind dealing in candor and faithfulness with life. Then the typical joys and sorrows and fears and hopes and disappointments and fulfillments are interpreted by a wide-ranging sympathy which is soundly based upon the integrity of the personality of the author and his respect for all other personalities. Some men do effective work by describing the unusual. The greatest artists enable us to see unsuspected relationships and profounder meanings than we had understood in the typical. And writers of smaller powers enter into a noble fellowship of interpreters through the same achievement. That fine little book *Mother,* by Kathleen Norris, stands apart from much contemporary writing by a secure and astonishingly vital expression of the very quality of the life of a mother. It is as if you followed the astonished eyes and the kindled heart of a very simple and human mother as she has discovered the meaning of her own experience. Joseph Conrad, in *Youth,* has done something much more subtle than the telling of a fine tale of vigorous-hearted adventure. Around some corners of the story you find yourself breathing sharply and feeling that you have confronted the immortal, intangible spirit of youth itself. You are a bit dazzled, as was the Old Pirate when Peter Pan gave his triumphant cry. But you have a strange happiness too —for once you were young.

Ann Sedgwick, in *The Old Countess,* has told the story of three amazing women and of a poor sort of a man. The man has a few intense feelings which he does not know how to resist. The old Countess is wicked with a fierce and savage power, which would capture one last passionate experience at whatever cost. The wife is never touched by ugly anger because, though she is capable of terrible suffering, the love she has experienced has the power of a great warmth but is incapable of conflagration. Only selfish feelings burn our lives and leave ashes where once there were hearts. And the lonely French girl who was caught in a net of contending passions, found life and death edged about by a terrible beauty because her loyalties were never broken down by her emotions. The extraordinary thing about such a book as *The Old Countess* is that it gives you the very taste of life at its intensest, and at the same moment allows you to see deeply into that significance which gives a possible grandeur to the most terrible moments of pain.

Dorothy Canfield puts marriage to a desperate test in *The Brimming Cup,* but it is a test which life itself is often requiring. The moment of glittering allurement comes to a splendidly equipped woman poised at the hour when youth first sights age. In the old Roman play the husband had a way of being amusing with no case which would appeal to your feelings whatever he might do in respect of your judgment. The husband in Dorothy Canfield's story refuses to have a case. He makes no argument. He lifts no requirement. The relation must stand because of its inherent vitality or he will not ask that it stand at all. And his refusal to take by law anything he cannot secure by more vital means puts him in a position of subtle dignity. The wife looks very clearly at that bright thing adventure, and at the darting-eyed and brilliant adventurer. She looks very clearly at her husband and her children, and quite simply her sense of vital values asserts itself. She finds her husband and her children infinitely more interesting than the apostle of the lawless lights. She does something very much more profound than to keep the seventh commandment. She enters into an experience of contact with reality which suggests the emergence of such a commandment in the world. It is as if she had discovered, for the first time anybody in the world had known it, the meaning of marriage.

Whenever the artist allows fundamental human experience to live again in his own mind and to drop warm from his pen, if the work is done with honesty and loyalty, the reader feels that a bit of life has indeed been made his own.

VII

Sometimes the artist watches the clash of contending desires and tells the tale of their clenched antagonisms in speech which has its own dramatic power. Browning sees two attitudes toward life meet in a moment of destiny and writes *Colombe's Birth-*

day under the inspiration of the experience. The tragedy and the glory of *Paracelsus* is that in him many desires contend for the mastery. The drama of his soul is really the quest for unity through diversity of thought, emotion, and experience. In his own romantic way Dickens tells the story of contradictory desires and of the manhood extorted from the contention in *The Tale of Two Cities*. There is a fashion in which desires take the bit in their teeth and go galloping down the road of life. You see this happen in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Sometimes events are seen seizing men with their masterful fingers. A certain type of artist is always tempted to portray men as the slaves of circumstance. Thomas Hardy could write with grim sympathy of puppets. He scarcely dared to believe in freedom. And so he developed that ironic mind which has played such a part in the drama of art. Dean Swift dipped his pen into corrosive irony. In our own time C. E. Montague has put into such a tale as *Right Off the Map* an ironic description of a whole civilization. And his pen, with its secrets of literary alchemy, has made the irony a thing set against contrasts of silvery beauty in such a book as *Disenchantment,* which in its own way is a great work of art.

But the very artist who gives vent to his anger in irony may work beside another artist who turns anger to ethical hope, and finds symbols for the expression of a satisfaction which must be found in hope rather than in assured experience. Wordsworth might have been a cynic with his own secrets of corrosive speech. Instead he built a world of faith in a perfect goodness and beauty, flashing its meaning through the materials of this transient world and the qualities of its fleeting experiences. He brought in a new world of ideal dreams to redress the wrongs of the old world of sordid realities. When such a mind takes the supreme step of believing that the universe is like his rarest and most radiant dream, and that the visible is real only as it is bent to the purposes of that invisible splendor, he enters that realm where Plato dwells, the supreme artist and almost in spite of himself the supreme inspirer of art in all the ages.

VIII

So it comes about that with the aid of the artists we can see as we have never seen before. With their assistance we can feel with a richness and variety of emotion which we never knew before. They also make it possible for us to think as we have never thought. And all together they make it possible for us to live as we have never lived before. They capture the whole of human experience and offer it to us as an experience of our own.

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LECTURE III

THE GENIUS OF THE CRITIC

Then there is the critic. It rather takes your breath away to turn to him from the artist. For now you have happened upon a man who has come to judge Cæsar and not to recreate him. The passionate impulse of vicarious creation is replaced by a cool and clear analysis, a steady and painstaking judgment. To be sure, the critic is not always cool. But his passion is the heat of a brilliant appraisal rather than the energy of joyous participation in experience for the sake of the experience itself. And it is also true that he may be himself master of the ways of subtle artistry. But the judge of life rather than the participant in life is in control even when, having entered the house of the artist, he looks out through its plate-glass windows.

The first critic may have entered upon his work in this fashion. In those dim days when life was lived among the trees, a curious creature moving from limb to limb suddenly paused in hesitation. There was a choice between two alluring trees near him. He puckered his queer face with the pain of hesitation and thought. But another creature in a near-by tree was watching him. He watched the pucker of hesitation upon the face oddly seen among the leaves of the trees. He took in the whole situation at a glance. It interested him strangely. There was a rustle of leaves, a leap of solid body, and the other tree dweller, having solved his problem, went his way among the branches. But the observer sat fascinated looking at the trees whose opportune branches had caused the hesitation. He was judging the judgment of the mind behind the darting eyes which a moment ago had been held in the clutches of the baffling experience of decision. There was an odd pleasure in judging the mental operations and the action of another inhabitant of the trees, though there were no such words as these at hand to describe the process. So the joys of criticism may have been tasted for the first time. So the critic may have appeared in the world.

There is an immense fascination in the mental attitude which consists in alert observation rather than in sympathetic participation. In watching a game of ball one spectator becomes each of the players in turn. He uses up no end of vitality in this delightful experience of emotional appropriation. Beside him sits another spectator whose quick eyes see all the possibilities of each situation. He sees not only what each player does—he sees what each player might do. His observation of the game comes to be a series of brilliant criticisms so quick and flashing that they are almost undirected by his will. It is as if a shadowy ideal player stood by each participant in the game. And this spectator is judging each of them by perpetually asking whether they are doing in each situation what that ideal player would do. You can be an interested onlooker if you have eyes, a general knowledge of the game, and emotions which respond quickly to the thrill of achievement. But to be a genuine and critical observer you must have a thorough knowledge of the game, a real understanding of the players, their training and their possibilities, and a particular flare for the strategy of this definite physical contest.

Games of all sorts are really interesting and compelling to participants and spectators alike, because in various ways they reflect life which is itself the greatest game of all. A clever student of baseball has pointed out the astonishing resemblance of America's national game to the activities of America's business men. The man who goes from an office in New York to the Polo Grounds has the activities of his own business dramatized in the diamond. You can learn more about an Englishman by watching a game of cricket at the Oval or at Lords than you might come to know after perusing many books. And life itself has an exhaustless fascination for the observant and appraising mind. It is as if the world is spread out on a vast green. The players take their places and you hold the score card and keep the record and judge the quality of the men who play the game.

It is clear enough that civilization has taken a step forward when the critic appears. He is a kind of absentee landlord of events. He has no immediate share in what goes on, but he receives an intellectual income from the busy activities of men. From his quiet and appraising mind something new and distinctive enters into the atmosphere of the world. As you observe him you begin to realize that the man who idly sits and thinks may indeed sow a nobler crop than corn.

All sorts of things begin to happen as the critic's mind does its work. He does not come strong-winged ready for critical flights. He makes his wings as he uses them. First there is the sheer impact of indistinguished and many-colored events. Then things begin to set themselves apart. Some are more appealing than others, some are obviously more useful than others, some can be used for tools in work, and some can be used as instruments for new and noble experience. So they are studied and compared and classified. So the sense of values emerges, and the gradation of values becomes an almost dramatic experience. You learn to see this in the light of that. You learn to judge that in the light of this. The passionate whirl of existence is brought to a pause by the critical mind and life ceases to be a headlong participation in experience. It becomes a careful and penetrating analysis of experience. The power of the detached mind begins to be understood. The insight of cool and unprejudiced appraisal begins to be appreciated.

The life, and especially the writings, of that brilliant Syrian of the second century, Lucian, who if he wrote Attic Greek with an occasional hesitation and not without a blunder here and there, still handled that flashing sword with an arm worthy of the steel, happily illustrate the power of the critical mind, the elements which compound in its activities, and the products which come from its sharp and corrosive energies. You will understand the genius of the critic rather definitely if you will make Lucian a boon companion.

It was natural, perhaps inevitable, that he should see everything in the terms of everything else. He was born in Samosata on the banks of the Euphrates. He lived in great cities all about the empire. He traveled everywhere. Greek became the tongue of his quick-moving mind, if it had not been the tongue of his infant life. The sense of contrast was basal in his experience—and the sense of contrast is the mother of judgment. When you see that this is not like that, you will soon come to feel that this is better than that. The Greek he loved was almost as far from his own time as Chaucer is from us. At infinite pains he attained an Attic mind. Then he found it necessary to live in a Roman world. Marcus Aurelius was on the imperial throne at the very center of

Lucian's days. He saw the empire in its Indian summer, but the chill winds of later autumn were not far away. The austere grandeur of the mind of Marcus Aurelius is very different from the darting and at times puckish intelligence of Lucian. You may be tempted to contrast the noble maturity of one with the impish irresponsibility of the other. You may want to say that Lucian never grew up. He is always cutting intellectual capers and playing tricks of the mind in the austere school of life. He is always making amusing pictures in the textbooks. But lightly as he carries his erudition, easily as he sends forth a quip and a darting phrase, there is an amazingly clear mind at work all the while. And as you become more familiar with his writing, though you see his tongue in his cheek very often, you also sense a quality of intelligent analysis and penetrating estimate which suggests a serious purpose back of all the play. And you may easily come to feel that at times the impudent malice of his speech forms a protective covering under which he deals faithfully with the life of his time.

As a lad, for one day it seemed that he would be trained to be a sculptor. But a lucky accident and an unhappy aftermath turned the lad quickly from the work upon which he had scarcely entered. The age of Lucian was not a period of original and creative action. The Roman Empire made up your mind about most things. So no end of men who might have liked a career of deeds were driven to a career of words. And thus the rhetorician came to his own. He was received by the exotic elite of many a city, and often he was quite wrapped about in garments of praise. The keen-tongued young Lucian decided to be a rhetorician. He tells of a sleeping vision when two female figures, Statuary and Culture, contended for his allegiance. He gave his mind and one can say without hesitation such heart as he had to give to Culture. Up to his fortieth year he pursued the bright and vivid ways of rhetoric. You find him in Greece and you find him in Italy. You even find him in Gaul. So passed the years from the second to the sixth decades of the second century. Lucian is willing to have us believe that he rose to the top of his profession. Words were always his slaves, and it is not at all difficult to believe that he did attain high visibility in his chosen career. The sense that a word may be a deed, a sentence a complicated action, and a paragraph a veritable cavalry charge of achievement is one of the most stimulating and potential and dangerous experiences in the world. The rhetorician is always tempted to believe that when he has said a thing he has done it. He may be much in error at this point, but sometimes the saying is the doing. And the sense of distinction at this point is the pivotal matter in the rhetorician's activity. There is, of course, always the temptation to use rhetoric to set people's prejudices to the music of a brightly persuasive speech. The clever man who provides bright new garments for people's favorite ideas is always a popular speaker. An enormous number of people do not want new ideas. They do not even especially want true ideas. They want convincing arguments on behalf of their favorite ideas. And if the speaker is able and ingenious enough to make the justification of preconceptions seem to come at the end of a brave and disinterested adventure in search of truth, they will pay him almost any price. The man who by very subtle processes helps us to deceive ourselves into thinking that we are wiser than we are is in a way a priceless person. The second-century rhetorician knew all this, and I suppose one must grant that to a good many of them the quest for truth was very much less important than the quest for popularity. To say that Lucian came through all this test of alluring temptation quite unscathed would perhaps be claiming too much. But he did have a sharp sense of veracity. He did care for truth. He did detest deception. He was not the sort of person to make a very good liar. During the years when Lucian practiced the art of rhetoric *per se* doubtless he did his work well. He tossed words about so that they fell like flowers upon those who would care about their beauty or their fragrance. But even when he was polite he was pursued by a sense of actuality. And perhaps the sense of the eyes of truth looking through the tossing curls of rhetorical expression made his words all the more effective.

For the truth was that all the while his alert eyes were seeing clearly and his penetrating mind was thinking without hesitation. Perhaps the demon of restlessness which drove him from city to city and from country to country was a curious messenger of that goddess of truth and discernment, whom after all he worshiped with a sincere devotion. He cared more for asking penetrating questions than for decorating pleasant answers in attractive speech. He cared more for the corrosive irony which pushes its way through subterfuge and make-believe than for the opulent success which is won by means of exquisitely distilled flattery. He cared more for keeping that darting mind of his free for daring and audacious adventures in thought and speech than for the dignified and premature senility of the successful flatterer. So in Italy or in Greece, in Gaul, or in those eastern towns to which he had first traveled, his restless eyes were always peering, his restless mind was always questioning, his restless tongue was always coining its own currency of ironic and illuminating speech. Perhaps he was so alert for shams that sometimes in sheer habitual cynicism he called truth itself a sham. In his flashing speech, with the easy light of gay irony perpetually playing upon it, there is the unconscious revelation of many an hour of disillusionment. His laughter is that of a seasoned man of the world whom you cannot deceive. But if that mirth is sometimes a little hard, it is not without the pain of a man who has found belief difficult in a world where there are so many lies.

At all events the years as a rhetorician came to an end. We cannot quite say that Lucian became a philosopher.

The names of the great philosophers and of the philosophic schools are all the while upon his lips. No name is too sacred for his gibe, no system too famous for his cool mirth. One must remember that he met most of the masters as their words dropped from the tongues of degenerate interpreters. He himself, however, shows no evidence of that synthetic habit of mind which builds up great systems of coherent thought. Indeed, it may be that rather often he is so much occupied with the incidental weakness that he misses the essential and defining strength. Yet he was capable of tremendous admiration and enthusiasm for a philosophic mind and of hearty loyalty to a philosopher who met the tests he so sternly applied. His essay on *Demonax* shows how full of friendly enthusiasm he could be, and his essay on *Nigrinus* shows how the Attic spirit mastered him. Indeed, he was a true son of Athens at heart. And even his gibes tell the tale of a spirit who does not propose to allow his eager idealism to blind him to the facts rather than a spirit who loves the unlovely and delights in falseness and duplicity for their own sake. He is not an ancient Sinclair Lewis playing the game of irony in Main Street because he really loves its crudities and at home with Babbitt because of the grinning gargoyle of a Babbitt he keeps in his own soul.

It is part of the tragedy of life that the best is all too often made the tool of the worst. Something like seven hundred years had passed since the great days in Athens. And the words of the mightiest figures had done small service for little men in many an age. And so when Lucian speaks of Socrates he is all too likely to mean the petty Socrates who inhabits the mind of a make-believe second-century philosopher. When in one of his mordantly witty dialogues he describes the fashion in which Hermes offers the creeds for sale, his hatred of sham and deception is perhaps a little more evident than his love of truth. But, after all, it is a love which has learned to protect itself from intellectual hypocrisy, which expresses itself in his most sardonic laughter. Under the most favorable circumstances, however, Lucian could scarcely have become a great philosopher. That genius for construction which characterizes the master minds was not his happy gift. And perhaps it must be confessed even by the best friends of Lucian that one finds little indication in his writings of great and mystical depths, while, if you really dislike his mind, you will probably call him a mocker and let it go at that. No end of brilliant surfaces does he expose to your inspection. The outlines are sharp and clear. The light is bright even if it is merciless. But the strange and quiet shadows of mystical and brooding contemplation seem to have had little allurement for Lucian's mind. After all, he knew what ugly and beastly things crawl away into the darkness, and probably he felt that the beating sunlight was more conducive to health than the damp and darkly rich shadows. He did not want to run the risk of intellectual malaria even for the purposes of a profounder apprehension of life.

And so he became a man of letters. There are some who would say that he became a Rabelais before the days of Rabelais. There are others who would say that he became a Dean Swift before the days of Dean Swift, and surely there is a sense in which very definitely he was a Voltaire before the days of Voltaire. More than that, these and others as well would have been something other than they were had Lucian never lived. Lucian made of the dramatically ironic dialogue an instrument subtly responsive to the quality of his mind, and some of his most famous and some of his best writing (the two are not always quite the same) come to us in this form.

There were obviously some aspects of the experience of the age which made it ready for Lucian. In a way it was like our own time in its tendency to subject old sanctions and old enthusiasms to close and unhesitating scrutiny. Like our own age, it had become a time of questioning. And, like our own age, it found a certain sense of relief, and even of expansion, in tossing old idols from their pedestals, in pointing out the falseness of old assumptions, the weakness of old arguments, and the breakdown of old sanctions. The austere and glorious Marcus Aurelius, fighting along the edges of the empire to keep Rome intact, was fighting another battle in his mind to secure firm hold upon the truths by which men must live. Lucian and men like him were rather more busy pointing out the falsehoods by which men must not attempt to live. They were thinking with tremendous energy of destroying the false. The great emperor was thinking with an almost mystical eagerness of maintaining those true sanctions which hold the secret of permanent life for the individual and the state. But it is important to remember that the destructive critic does not rise in a careless or a thoughtless age. The sluggishness of heavy complacency does not produce the quick thrust of the critic's sword, and an age which had become completely beastly would not even take the trouble to defend beastliness. Swine do not have a formal philosophy of the sty. That restless questioning, that exhaustless movement of inquiring thought which characterized Lucian and which secured a large audience of like-minded people all over the empire, belonged to an age driven by desires which had come to no sure fruition, haunted by dreams which came to no noble fulfillment, drawn by aspirations which, for all their gossamer delicacy of texture, would not loosen their hold upon the mind of man. These things, which lie under the surface of the writings of Lucian, give them at least a part of their power and help to account for their hold upon us to-day.

In becoming a man of letters, ready to express this mood and this attitude of mind in ironical and powerful fashion, Lucian had clearly traveled far from the path of the able and skillful rhetorician whose magical control over words secured the praise of men. There is a moral depth about the new task which requires character as well as mental agility, and insight as well as control over persuasive forms of speech. So we are not surprised that Lucian finds it necessary to invent what comes to be a new literary instrument to do this precise and difficult and corrosive work. The dialogue lay waiting to his hand in the works of the philosophers. Brilliant masters of satiric comedy like Aristophanes waited at his door with all the secrets of acid sarcasm. It was his insight of a strategy which amounts to genius of a high order that the two could be combined. It was his superb achievement to combine them in a fashion which has surely never been surpassed and has scarcely been equalled in the centuries which have followed his own.

The really educated man of the period of Lucian was brought up on Homer as men a little while ago were brought up on the Bible. (One says a little while ago, for a new, strange day has dawned. Recently in a great university a professor who found his class a little restless toward the end of the hour, observed with a twinkle in his eye, "Gentlemen, I have a few more pearls to cast before you before the end of the period." The utterly dull and irresponsive eyes of the members of the class told all too definitely that he had assumed a "common for all" which did not exist.) That Homeric knowledge which was the very vertebræ of culture in the days of Lucian was completely possessed by him. He thinks in Homeric phrases as easily as if Homer were a language and not an individual author. And he has this tremendous advantage that his readers all over the empire will know what he is talking about when he refers in the most incidental way to Homer and will feel the full music of memory at work when he uses the Homeric idioms. A civilization is waning when a man becomes the master of its most distinguished vernacular only to discover that he is speaking a language which men about him do not comprehend. Indeed, the substance of Greek literature and Greek history may surely be said to have been alive in the mind of Lucian. Curiously enough, it is said that he makes not a single reference to a Latin author. And if there is such a reference, the reading of most that remains, and is acknowledged to be the authentic product of his pen, has allowed it to escape my eye. The very profound fashion in which the mind of Lucian was saturated with the ripe and restrained beauty of Greek writing must always be kept in mind. He was more than a Syrian whose mind was Greek. He was a man the very texture of whose thought has become something different because the essential warp and woof of it were furnished by the materials which expressed the essential genius of the Greek spirit. Here you find the unconscious assumptions which lie back of his most destructive criticism. Here you find the standards which lie at the root of his most iconoclastic writing.

Lucian weighed a good many things in the balances provided by his cool and clear and somewhat hard intelligence and found them wanting. He weighed Greek religion in the balances and found it wanting. Here is a powerful passage from *Timon the Misanthrope*. Timon is speaking: "O Zeus, thou arbiter of friendship, protector of the poet, preserver of fellowship, lord of the hearth, launcher of lightning, avenger of oaths, compeller of clouds, utterer of thunder (and pray add any other epithets: those cracked poets have plenty ready, especially when they are in difficulties with their scansion; then it is that a string of your names saves the situation and fills up the metrical gaps). O Zeus, where is now your resplendent lightning, where your deep-toned thunder, where the glowing white-hot direful bolt?—that renowned projectile of yours which ranged so far and was so ready to your hand, has gone dead and cold it seems; never a spark left in it to scorch iniquity—there are you in your opiate trance never hearing perjuries nor casting a glance at criminals, your glazed eyes dull to all that happens, and your ears as deaf as a dotard's—when you were young and keen your temper had some life in it; you used to bestir yourself against crime and violence; there were no armistices in those days; and now, Son of Cronos and Rhea, may I ask you to shake off that deep sleep of yours—put the bellows to your thunderbolt or warm it up in Etna, get it into a good blaze and give a display of spirit like a manly vigorous Zeus? Or are we to believe the Cretans who show your grave among their sights?"[1]

You have here something much more evasive and yet much more potent than argument. And in the *Dialogues of the Gods*—beneath an assumed simplicity—you have all the while a brilliant and devastating criticism. The gods are human—all too human. Yet they are merely the gods of the Greek religion stripped of the subtle atmosphere of reverence which noble rhetoric can give, for Lucian, rhetorician as he has been, has learned an amazing secret. If rhetoric can give, rhetoric can also take away. And perhaps his tongue is in his cheek as he mutters something which sounds strangely like "Blessed be the name of rhetoric." He is all the while saying in effect that if you give the Greek gods rope enough, they will hang themselves. And he proceeds to give them plenty of rope. Only he is too skillful actually to tell you that they will hang themselves. Rather he takes you to Olympus, saying that a number of interesting things are going on there—and you watch the spectacle of the hanging for yourself. The very cool simplicity of his dialogues makes you have a sharp realization that the gods are no better than they ought to be. You knew this before perhaps, but he gives you a realizing sense of it. It is like going to an amusement park where the electric lights burned very brightly at night, and then, under the bright and disillusioning light of the noonday, looking upon the shabbiness and tinsel and make-believe and wondering where the magic has gone. But although the gods when he has done with them have quite ceased to be divine, they still have a curious interest.

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[1] *Works of Lucian*, vol. i, pp. 31, 32, 33. Translated by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press.

You see that they are only versatile Greeks wearing the garments of Olympus. But even off the stage they have a way of capturing your thoughts. This king of tragedy has tragedies of his own when the play is over. So Lucian has a baffling, almost tender glance back at the nervous half-furtive, anxious deities who crowd together on an Olympus which has lost its tragic splendor, but whose shabby figures cannot quite forget the glory which once was theirs. It is as if a ragged Zeus asking you for a drink reminds you that he once had a good table and a good cellar of his own, but all that remains of ambrosia is the odor of stale beer upon his breath.

Did many readers fail to see the grim satire under Lucian's light and bantering tales? And did some feel a sense of heartbreak in the presence of a glory which was passing? In any event the *Dialogues of the Gods* were read and copied and kept alive, and they are with us to-day.

But what about the new religion which was lifting its proud, strong head above the hostile waves? It is clear that Lucian had a sharp eye for the make-believe of some of its professors. It seems clear that some tales told of it seemed to him unbelievable enough. He could refer to it in words not without a degree of fairness and restraint. But he scarcely came to actual grips with it at all.

But many thoughtful men about the empire found their religion in philosophy rather than in religion itself. And here Lucian was ready to bring all the resources of a bitter gayety to the expression of his disillusionment. As we have already seen, he weighed a good many philosophic teachings in the balance and found them wanting. In the *Fishers* he pictures the dead philosophers coming upon him full of ire. Nothing daunted he stands trial and wins an acquittal, and then the pretensions of living philosophers are exposed in brilliant and caustic and cruelly effective fashion. It is the degradation of philosophy, the avarice of philosophers, the evil lives wedded to high purposes which have called forth his ire. But under all his defense and his cruel irony there is an odd sense of vacuum. He has driven the seven devils out. But who is to inhabit the place where the seven devils dwelt?

And so you are not surprised to find notes of disillusionment with life itself. At times it seems that Lucian has weighed life in the balances and has found it wanting.

There is something adhesive about his mind. Hypocrisies fasten themselves to his intelligence, and he always sees them for what they are. The tale of *Alexander the Oracle Monger* illustrates this habit of mind. Now he sets himself to tell the story of the Alexander the Great of clever duplicity. He has a kind of malicious delight in describing the impressive qualities and the brilliant artistry of Alexander. Here was no small deceiver. Here was the arch charlatan of his time. Lucian paints his portrait without hesitation or evasion. And so you see this master of make-believe full size. The public glitter, the inner falseness, the appearance of urbane nobility, the inner ugliness and hard malicious evil, all are here. And here, too, you see that in a sense a good part of the public loved to be deceived, and was rather ready to hate the man who uncovered the deception. Lucian had a bit of honest fear of the man whose whole attitude seemed to be expressed by the words, "Blessed is he who enables me to keep my illusions." The rather ugly tale of his biting the hand of Alexander flashes with a sudden bitter intensity. You see how he hated the whole ugly world of duplicity as he tells the story.

The *Dialogues of the Hetæræ* show how clearly his mind moved among the actual experiences of all sorts of people. It is almost as if he had overheard every conversation which he constructs. These dialogues are singularly free from self-consciousness. Lucian gives you the sense of an honest attempt to understand. And you feel that he is really able to think the thoughts of the Hetæræ after them. There is something fairly uncanny about overhearing their unlovely gossip after seventeen hundred years. The criticism is implicit rather than explicit. This is all a part of the world which Attic taste and Attic sanctions have made. At least it is something which the Attic spirit has tolerated. The pettiness, the barrenness, the sheer ugliness of it all stand out before you.

And the taste you feel in your mouth is acknowledged as unpleasant enough by the palate.

When Charon takes a day off from his grim task in the underworld and high above the Mediterranean civilization takes his quick and understanding survey of it all, you can fairly hear the author of the book of Ecclesiastes crying, "Vanity of vanities." "Does it ever occur to him that he must die some day?" cries Charon as he sees Milo of Croton, the athlete, hugely elated over his feat of carrying a bull along the race course while the Greeks applaud. "What a jostling life it is!" cries Charon to Hermes as he looks about. "What a world of ups and downs! Their cities remind me of beehives. Every man keeps a sting for his neighbor's service." Then says Hermes: "There is no word for the absurdity of it. They do take it all so seriously—that is the best of it; and then long before they have finished scheming, up comes good old Death and whisks them off, and all is over." The general sense of disillusionment in Lucian's case is doubtless sharpened by personal experience. *The Dependent Scholar* rings with the bitterness of memory. This is not merely analysis. It is autobiography.

So Lucian looks about his world, and, light as is his touch and gay as are many of his sentences, we feel that he has weighed it in the balances and has found it wanting.

But he kept on living. Some say he lived to have a hundred years behind him. And if an angry Christian writer whose imagination saw Lucian torn to pieces by the dogs which he would like to have seen destroy the mocking critic, did more credit to his anger than to his accuracy or to his Christian spirit as he told the tale, and Lucian saw a ripe and full old age, one feels like asking, what were the sanctions by which he fed his spirit, what were the truths by which he lived? We have already made it clear that he is most characteristically an apostle of destruction. He is a detective whom evil customs cannot escape. He detects the true character of a thing whatever its chameleon changes and its strange disguises.

But he held a deeper grasp upon life's realities than his mocking phrases would reveal. When the philosophers accuse him he is sure of his triumphant vindication. What he satirizes is not true philosophy, but philosophic pretense. His *Life of Demonax* reveals the roots of many of his admirations. "He indulged in no Socratic irony (how men love their opposites!) but his discourse was full of Attic grace; those who heard it went away neither disgusted by senility nor repelled by ill-tempered censure, but on the contrary lifted out of themselves by charity and encouraged to more orderly, contented, hopeful lives." "He was every man's friend, counting among his kindred whoever has had human shape." Lucian tells a fascinating tale of how Menippus, satisfied by no living teacher, went to the realm of the dead. He was determined to find someone who would give him a "plain and reliable map of life." At last he found Tiresias, who, however, refused to enlighten him. Menippus persisted and at last extorted from Tiresias the words, "Pursue one end alone—how you may do what your hand finds to do, and go your way with a smile and never a passion." It is a simple sentence but it has its own full-ripe wisdom. And so under the scoffer there was the man of simple creed, a creed for which all his gibes and ironic phrases were doubtless intended to make way. And in such a sentence you come as near catching a glimpse of the heart of Lucian as it is possible for any one to do. Of course, he never thought that sleeves existed for the purpose of exposing hearts.

Such men as Lucian are all the while appraising, all the while questioning. They do not find it easy to lose themselves in creative experiences. They seize an experience before it has fairly gotten under way, and they demand its credentials. They are the officers who stand at the entrance to the country of the mind. And they insist on seeing the passports of all who would travel there. Among them all Lucian of Samosata has a place quite his own. The Attic speech and the Attic spirit had had a distinguished, indeed, a dominant place in the life of the world century after century. And in Lucian it came to pass that an alien who adopted Athens as the city of his spirit came to understand and express its genius as did no Greek of his own day.

He drew the great bow and the arrow went to its mark.

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LECTURE IV

THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CRITIC

We may as well begin this lecture with a consideration of the silence of Paul Valèry. Malcolm Cowley tells us how in 1892, soon after attaining his twentieth birthday, Paul Valèry came to Paris. The Symbolist movement was in full swing. A few of the poems of the new arrival in Paris were published in the Symbolist reviews. The people who sat on the thrones of criticism were attracted by them. A brilliant and successful life seemed to be opening auspiciously. But the young man turned away from it all and spent twenty years in silence. That they were years of desperately intense study and mental grapple and closely disciplined thought is clear enough. He came out of them to move with singular swiftness to a position of commanding leadership. He did not make terms with his public. His public accepted the terms he offered them. The nation was fairly startled when the French poets declared him the most distinguished of them all. And then he was elected to the seat in the French Academy left vacant by the death of Anatole France. By general acclaim he now sits upon his own throne of judgment.

But what had come out of the twenty years of silence? You feel how deeply he had analyzed the strange unrest of the modern mind when you read in his essay on "The Intellectual Crisis": "In what consisted the disorder of our mental Europe? In the free coexistence in all cultivated minds of the most dissimilar ideas, the most contradictory principles of life and knowledge. Every thinker was a world's fair of minds."[1] It is in this world that Valèry appears as a defender of conscious mind. It is in this world that he appears as the foe of specialization. It is in this world that he lifts up the ideal of the universal man. And as we read his brilliant and somewhat difficult pages we are never able to forget the twenty years of silence through whose discipline he attained the critical mind, and out of which he came to give expression to a criticism which itself should sow the seeds of new achievement.

I

The sweep of thought represented by the periods which lie between Aristotle and Paul Valèry fairly staggers one's mind. I have no desire at the moment to attempt even a summary view of its achievements. Rather

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[1] *Variety*, by Paul Valèry. Translated by Malcolm Cowley, pp. 10, 11. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., publishers.

I want to illustrate some aspects of the achievement of perspective which criticism has wrought out. I shall move about freely, and it will serve my purpose best to go from age to age without too constant a regard for historical continuity. It is necessary, however, to begin with Aristotle.

The first step in the attainment of perspective is classification. In Aristotle a really first-class mind applies itself to the tasks of observation and analysis and classifying. Indeed, it is probable that the matter ought to be put more strongly. In Aristotle a superb genius of commanding power applies itself to these tasks. He may be writing of those vast realms beyond physics. Always there is the most careful and painstaking gathering of the material. Always there is an almost uncanny insight which leads to the discovery of singularly effective principles of classification. And when the work has been done the whole world of possible knowledge has submitted to orderly organization.

If one may use anachronistic figures, sometimes you feel that Aristotle found the mental world in a state which resembled an old curiosity shop with everything cast about in the most bewildering and haphazard fashion, and he left it as neatly and skillfully organized as a modern department store, with a floorwalker on every level who knows how most quickly and wisely to direct you to the place where the goods you most desire are attractively and adequately displayed. To be sure, a figure savoring of the market would have been most unattractive to Aristotle. If his shade could return, doubtless he would like better to be compared to one of those arduous scientists who began the work of organizing knowledge upon the basis of certain principles which appeared to them to be sound and defining. In this sense Francis Bacon was one of the first modern men and Aristotle would have been proud to recognize him as a son. Appraisal and judgment based upon a careful process of classification gave a solid foundation to all later Greek thought. In this sense men like Aristotle saved the Greek mind from temporary occupation with a succession of brilliant phantasmagoria with no sound basis in the actualities of experience and a mental life with no standards which grow out of a profound study of experience itself.

As we shall see later, there have been critics who have felt standards to be cramping and confusing. They have preferred the delicate and exotic and exquisite expression of their emotions in the presence of evasive experiences which must be submitted to no other tests or demanding standards. It is enough to say at this stage of the discussion that had such been the attitude of the Attic mind, everything which gives a deathless quality to Greek art and Greek criticism would have been impossible.

II

But perhaps I spoke hastily when I referred to the pre-Aristotelian state of the Greek mind as resembling an old curiosity shop. In the nature of the case such a figure must be relative. The followers of Protagoras suggest other and fertile trails. And then one must never forget Plato. But that suggestion is like declaring in Japan that one must not forget Fujiyama.

Surely, we are likely to be reminded that a mind which is consummately able in the classification and the organization of materials is to be observed in the Republic. And surely Plato is the father of the Aristotle who had a superb sense of the fashion in which materials should be fitted together in logical form. This we have no inclination to deny. But, after all, we remember Aristotle because of his commanding powers in these directions. And we remember Plato because of mental activities which transcend the whole matter of observation and classification. Plato is always on the trail of the impalpable and invisible reality which gives meaning to the materials with which he is dealing. Aristotle accepts the meaning and sets about organizing the materials on the basis of a scheme which is the product of his brilliant mind. So there is a sense in which Aristotle the philosopher gave a body to criticism, and Plato the philosopher gave a soul to criticism. Aristotle goes to the valley of dry bones and assembles all the bones in entirely correct articulation. He even succeeds in placing vital organs just where they belong. But it is Plato who makes it possible to speak the word which gives life to these strange organisms so that they breathe and think and speak and act. If, in a sense, it is true that every man is born a Platonist or an Aristotelian, we can see clearly enough at the point which our analysis has now reached what the distinction means.

It is possible of course to say that really Aristotle is a critic and Plato is an artist. There is an element of truth in this suggestion, but it does not quite penetrate to the root of the matter. Rather Plato is a critic to whom the creative impulse is of the greatest significance, while Aristotle is a critic to whom the forms assumed as a result of the creative activity are the matters demanding attention.

The truth is that every appearance of the Platonic principle has meant the bubbling up of vital energies in the world of critical thought. Plotinus throws literal floods of light upon the matter of understanding and appraising the artistic impulse by the use of principles essentially Platonic. And when Hegel appears, his critical insights have their roots in the thought of Plato. The belief that there is a reality participating in whose quality we find the meaning of life, and reproducing whose quality we produce beauty in all its forms, gives a solid basis in philosophical insight to all criticism of life and all judgment of beauty. Even when the goal is conceived as a flying goal the quest for standards becomes the quest for reality, and the contact with standards is apprehended as a contact with reality itself.

It is natural enough that critics whose whole conception of criticism makes it a series of adventures with undisciplined emotions will have an instinctive distaste for Plato. He is all the while asking questions they instinctively wish to evade. And he is all the while confronting sanctions which they wish to ignore. To set fire to chaos and to call the conflagration art is far from the Greek ideal. To take a photograph of that conflagration and to call it criticism is far enough from the principles of Plato. And then there is a good deal of difficulty in accounting for the presence of the camera or the photographer in that chaotic world.

III

But perhaps we ought to expect that only at great levels will criticism reach the heights suggested by the Platonic insights. And we ought frankly to admit that criticism may have notable values without possessing the perspective of the mountain heights. For instance, criticism may come to be the interpretation of particular lives and of movements with delicate instruments of sympathetic perception. And so it may render services deserving our deep and constant gratitude. Here we may take Sainte-Beuve as a conspicuous and accomplished savant. This master of troy weight and all varieties of delicate intellectual measurements lived in a period when all sorts of sanctions were losing their power to command. He inherited a critical tradition which had given him a subtly responsive instrument in French prose of exquisite finesse (even if Philip Guadella does profanely call it one long Taine without any turning). He inherited also a tradition of entering into the very lives of people and of movements and of looking out upon the world from within, and he gave to each tradition a new and notably brilliant and, in a certain sense, on the critical side, a final expression.

The *Causeries du Lundi* and the other critical essays of Sainte-Beuve bring before us a pageant almost as many-sided and miraculous as life itself. In a sense it is life turned into exquisitely brocaded tapestries. His portraits of seventeenth-century France almost literally recreate the atmosphere and life of the period. His eighteenth-century portraits feel the very pulse of the age and masterfully interpret the significance of every beat. It is withal the achievement of a critic. The artist *per se* would let the life live in his words. Sainte-Beuve is all the while passing the life through the alembic of his singularly powerful mind, and the chemical reaction of his criticism gives to the result a character quite its own. You are never allowed to become so one with the action or the character that you forget the poised and cool, if interested and sympathetic work of the critical perceptions.

All this is seen with singular clarity in Sainte-Beuve's treatment of women. The supreme delicacy and grace and finesse of his touch as he carves out his representation of some of the great personalities among the women of seventeenth and eighteenth-century France give to these essays a subtle adequacy which must be experienced rather than described. The play of all the rich and gracious and beautiful qualities of sensitiveness and of moral and spiritual awareness in the lives of great women is portrayed with sureness and certainty of touch; the flash of darting intelligence and the tossing of the flames of burning words from mind to mind are expressed with complete and appreciative understanding; the involved aspects of social intelligence are interpreted with unhesitating command of the materials. Indeed, the more intricate and difficult the situation, the more necessary it is to estimate the play of emotions which associate themselves with the erotic or the play of the appeal of sex, the more his pen moves with a distinguished and tactful skill which leaves the reader breathless. He provides his own clear and lucid and brightly cool atmosphere through which even unsavory things are seen with a clarity in which one has a feeling that they have been sterilized.

Sainte-Beuve's treatment of ideas has the same sharp perceptiveness. It is not ideas in isolation of which he speaks. He has no great interest in the ghosts of thought, but he does care tremendously for ideas as they live in men's minds and grow warm in the fire of their emotions and attain a steel-like strength in their wills. He can follow the subtle trails of theological discussion, or of ethical theory with a never-failing sense of the significance of these things in the minds of the men and women who debated about them and in the lives which were influenced by their sanctions.

Sainte-Beuve knows how to reproduce the very quality of the atmosphere in which thoughts were apprehended, emotions swept out like rivers tumbling from high mountains upon level plains, and wills bent to the actions which carried purposes to secure fulfillment. He can make you detect the scent of a flower held by a great lady at the moment when with flashing eyes and keen-edged tongue she tossed a bright epigram into the mind of Louis XIV.

But most of all Sainte-Beuve is a master of that dim and seminal world in which motives are born and grow to maturity. He is a skilled horticulturist who knows how seeds are planted in the soil of man's inner life, how they are watered and fed by soil and sunshine, how they grow, and how they reach maturity and flowering time and ripe fruit. In this field no patient study is too laborious for him, no long expedition of pioneering in the uncharted regions of men's minds is too difficult for him. He has an insatiable hunger for knowledge of the motives of men. He has a profound sense of justice. He has a deep sense of intellectual obligation. And out of all his study of men's motives and actions he has achieved an almost completely civilized mind. At times his movements become too subtle for analysis, too delicate for characterization. When you have spent hours during many days and months with his essays you begin to feel as if civilization itself has made you a confidant.

IV

On the other hand a student of the ways of men may use his slowly achieved and vast resources of erudition, not for the sheer delight of exercising understanding and critical judgment, but for the purpose of defending a thesis which is the crown of his own study and the conclusion of his most critical thought. Oswald Spengler's monumental work *The Decline of the West* may stand as an illuminating example of this sort of criticism. Here the urban type of civilization is seen as containing in its heart inevitable seeds of decay. And great cycles are seen through which successive cultures inevitably pass to their doom. The wealth of knowledge, the detail of technical material, the variety of mental and moral, æsthetic and scientific and political life and activity which Oswald Spengler brings before the reader in arguing his case, gives one a new conception of the possibilities of critical intelligence when it bends to its service the amplest scholarship. And all these battalions of facts, all these armies of interpretation are brought to the battle front in the name of one contention: our Western civilization is well on in an inevitable process of decay.

One does not need to accept the conclusion in all its widely ramifying implications in order to feel the stupendous qualities of critical acumen, the fairly titanic command of the most varied materials, which Doctor Spengler displays.

The idea is sure to come to the thoughtful reader that a man of equal erudition and equal facility in the marshaling of evidence and the setting forth of conclusions, could write another *magnum opus* to show the fashion in which free-moving inspirations have played upon men and cultures and civilizations, giving them a golden and tragically glorious hour of choice, which was also an hour of destiny. And out of such a process of interpretation of the cultures whose memories haunt our bravest dreams, he might lead us to see that the present hour in Western civilization is an hour of terrific strategy because it is an hour of supreme choice. He might lead us to feel that it is indeed true that the way which Doctor Spengler discusses may be ours if we choose it, but that it need not be so. The golden doors will yet open if we rise to the height of the great decision. However this may be, the work which Doctor Spengler has done and the work which we venture to think another masterful critic might do, suggest the possibilities of criticism when the critic is a lawyer with a brief for a particular case.

V

It is quite possible for the critic to limit his own field. Professor George Saintsbury's monumental *History of Criticism* fills three large volumes with the tale of the work of the literary critics. His work becomes, to use his own subtitle, a history of literary taste in Europe. In other words, he finds that literature gives pleasure. He finds that the sources and quality of this pleasure have been subjected to analysis and appraised by a multitude of men living in different lands and in different centuries. He makes himself the master of this vast body of material written in many languages and in the thought forms of the most varied periods and the most diverse lands. Then he tells the tale in his crisp, cogent, provocative style, and makes it all a really first-class product of the critic's mind. He criticizes the critics and in a measure assumes the position of a Master Critic himself.

Within his limits the work is superbly done, and he surely had the right to set his own limits, to choose his own boundaries. Enough that he rules like a king in the territory which he claims for himself.

But is it quite enough? Enough perhaps for Professor Saintsbury. But is it enough for the rest of us? Can we be contented with a criticism which analyzes the sources and quality of the pleasure which literature gives and lets it go at that? Are there not profounder relations involved in the criticism of the great writers and the great writing of the world? And is not Professor Saintsbury practically forced to ignore much of the most fruitful and significant work of the critics whom he discusses because of the narrow limits which he sets for himself?

To be sure, there are those who would rejoice in the limitation. To Walter Pater beauty consisted in a golden moment of exquisite sensation. To refine that moment to the utmost disciplined intensity of enjoyment, to extort the utmost essence of subtly distilled pleasure from that moment before it winged its flight, and to secure the utmost number of such moments, was the task of the artist. To understand and interpret the process was the task of the critic of art. And to this labor he brought mental powers and æsthetic perceptions of the most potently sophisticated quality.

Sometimes you understand a critical position best when you contemplate its extreme expression. Oscar Wilde was Walter Pater gone mad. Or, if you like, he was Walter Pater too deeply under the influence of the grapes of Dionysus. He was Walter Pater drunk. And through his irresponsible inebriety there run flashes of exquisite insight, flashes of sheer flippant impertinence, and there are impish gambols when he stands truths on their heads in sheer maudlin amusement. Oscar Wilde's "Critic as an

Artist" will remain a document of singular and continuing interest. Here the really brilliant man quite without standards dances before us in the Dionysian ecstasy. It is infinitely clever. But at last we have a suspicion that criticism must do better than to cultivate the intellectual equivalent of Saint Vitus's dance.

VI

In some more sober fashion the critic when he is dealing with letters may set about showing us how the literary products of a period came out of life and how they are related to life. In 1913 Arthur Quiller-Couch became the Edward VII Professor of Literature at Cambridge University. The study of literature was tending to become a study of philology. And with all due respect to the really substantial merits of philology this meant that the truehearted study of literature was ceasing to be. But the very terms of the professorship to which Arthur Quiller-Couch had been called—as he reminded his hearers in his inaugural—involved the treatment of the subject "along literary and critical rather than philological and linguistic lines." So a finely equipped student of masterpieces and their makers came to his home and place. Right royally has Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch discharged his responsibility, and the men all about the world who carry in their pockets his *Art of Writing,* his *Adventures in Criticism,* his *Studies in Literature* and the rest, prove how far his voice has gone beyond Cambridge University.

Here you have a mind very full and ripe turning its attention to the literary output of a great nation. He lives past days over again. He crawls into the mind of authors long dead and thinks their thoughts after them. He sees how the age made possible the man. He sees what the men did to the age. He sees the evolution of a nation's thoughts, its ideas and its ideals. He watches the men of letters become masters of life as from their urns they rule the minds of their successors. He allows the lithe phrase, the graceful epithet, the deep-flowing music of resounding lines, the march of well-groomed sentences in stately paragraphs, the faces which peer behind words playing hide and seek with the reader's mind; the full and masterful writing when thought and speech, feeling and insight unite to make some thing in its own way perfect and so deathless—he allows all these to live in his mind and then to drip from the point of his own pen, a pen with secrets of magic and secrets of power.

And so Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch makes criticism the vehicle of an understanding fellowship with the whole life and experience of one of the great nations of the world.

VII

For over a quarter of a century Mr. Bruce Richmond has been the presiding genius of the Literary Supplement of the London Times. And during that time he has made this periodical the most authoritative organ of criticism in the English-speaking world. It has been his constant effort when a new book of genuine significance was published to secure a reviewer who knew as much or more about the subject than the man who wrote the book. And the policy of anonymous articles had made it easier to give confidence to men whose claim to authority was in their mastery of a subject rather than their reputation and to secure work of simple soundness from men who, had they signed their articles, might have felt a certain strain or been tempted to artificiality or eccentricity in order to live up to a reputation characteristic and brilliant. During these years one of the ablest of the contributors has been Arthur Clutton-Brock, now no longer among those whose powerful pens help to form the taste of English-speaking readers. In Arthur Clutton-Brock one came upon a man of letters who literally lived with the books of which he wrote. He was all the while moving toward a philosophy of beauty and in the meantime he was writing with infinite pains and many a flash of penetrating understanding of masters in the world of creative writing, and of many a smaller wielder of a pungent pen. His thought ranged over no end of subjects. He was always sure-footed in his sentences, perhaps because he was so clear as to what he desired to say, and every subject he touched was seen from some angle which gave it a new interest and a new significance. His words were always the expression of ideas and never a bright substitute for thought. Sometimes he flashed out sentences of overwhelming brilliancy and penetration, as when he wrote in an essay on Samuel Butler: "You could be on your guard against the church, with its exasperating habit of telling little lies in the cause of a great truth: but the men of science, he thought, told little truths in the cause of a great lie—and the world was not on its guard against them."[1] He can put the problems of life and thought in a terribly effective sentence: "But beauty is of the spirit and the flesh, and it is that harmony of both which Tolstoy despaired of."[2] His irony can be corrosive enough, as when he speaks of judging mankind "with the implacable fastidiousness of the idle." He can be oddly arresting, "for beauty often seems ugliness when the mind is bewildered by its strangeness."[3] As you follow the essays of Arthur Clutton-Brock you feel all the while in contact with an eager and searching mind, soundly disciplined, terribly afraid of sham and make-believe, with a reserved and yet passionate love for beauty and a deep desire to see life informed by some inner and commanding spirit of loveliness.

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[1] *Essays on Books,* Clutton-Brock, p. 153. Reprinted by permission of E. P. Dutton & Company, publishers.

[2] *More Essays on Books,* Clutton-Brock, p. 169. Reprinted by permission of E. P. Dutton & Company, publishers.

VIII

In the very nature of the case there must often be a tempest in the critic's mind. Too many forces play upon his life for easy condensation, so he struggles with his materials and at one period sometimes contradicts his utterances in another.

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[3] *More Essays on Books,* Clutton-Brock, p. 46. Reprinted by permission of E. P. Dutton & Company, publishers.

Perhaps the most gifted of the younger critics in the United States in the last twenty-five years was Doctor Stuart Sherman. His knowledge of literature was the result of prolonged application and of sound, clear thinking. He achieved a style of extraordinary limpidity and clarity and quiet force, glowing once and again as the vivid light of his mind fell upon it. For years Stuart Sherman was a powerful young Saul in the Sanhedrin of the Elder Statesmen in the American republic of the mind. Classic standards and classic ideals dominated his mind and directed his pen. His brightly flashing sword did deadly execution among the glittering and pagan hosts without the law. His essays were written with distinction and at times with a controlled liquid fire. When he wrote of Anatole France among the devils of Notre Dame in Paris seeing the vision of the cities and kingdoms of this world and making the great surrender, there were an ethical insight and an easy masterfulness of expression which carried his analysis to the very center of the reader's mind.

Then this young Saul, by a reversed journey to a strange, luxuriant Damascus (or was it New York?), submitted to a conversion different enough from that of Paul; or, to put it more adequately, this devotee of Artemis looked into the eyes of Aphrodite and his old loyalties fell from him like worn-out garments. He began strangely to praise the sort of thing he had blamed, and to blame the sort of thing he had praised. No wonder that a good many of his old friends felt that the young monk had surrendered to the charms of Thais. In place of the old clarity of vision there was now a vivid and brilliant restlessness. He was in a swirl of swiftly moving waters. He stood in a bark decked with hangings of strange and exotic beauty. The ship was gay with flags and streamers and its lines were shapely and alluring. The sea tossed purple waves about at the end of a clear and boldly stormy day. The young captain stood on the bridge with the wind blowing through his hair. It was all very astonishing, almost magnificent, until you noticed that no firm hands controlled the wheel. The captain on the bridge had a Dionysian light in his eye—but no one thought of the rudder.

The restless and not entirely harmonious qualities of the critic's mind are seen in the very distinguished work of Edwin Muir. When he is dealing with an artist, you watch the sure movement of his hand as you might watch the hand of a great surgeon in a critical operation. He removes the tissue and reveals the very organ which must be dealt with. You feel that he knows what made an author what he was. He knows what made him write as he wrote. And he puts this knowledge at your disposal in clear and effective words. Then at times he stands back as if afraid of certainties which would lessen the adventurous glow of life. He seems an apostle of the unleashed passion of undirected experiment. You feel that the critic has felt the call of the wild, at least the call of the lawless.

But he does not rest contented with this mood. He feels it a bitter thing for a man to have no cosmos in which to assemble his theories. He feels that societies need reintegration. An age of transition faces problems the dead order did not solve. But it must attain a "living complex of beliefs." He sees how tragic a thing it is in Mrs. Woolf's phrase to be working "with infinite pains in almost utter darkness." He admits that it may be said of some contemporary writers of great distinction that they hate all their characters. And he begins to see that there must be a promised land, a land of new integration, new harmony of mind. So out of the confusion he looks with eyes not without eagerness. He stands knee deep in confusion. But at times he looks toward the east. Perhaps the sun will rise again.

IX

Then there are the critics who frankly believe in standards. They unhesitatingly go forth to find standards. To them artistry if it is true and permanent is a combination of loyalty and adventure. And they believe that the loyalty makes possible the adventure, and especially they believe that the loyalty makes the adventure fruitful. And here we must speak of the men who have borne the heat of the great battle in America in the tremendous and belligerent years through which we have been living. We must speak of W. C. Brownell, we must speak of Paul Elmer More, and we must speak of Irving Babbitt. That these elder statesmen of criticism have stood up under hard usage is not to be denied: "These excellent gentlemen were effigies that we dragged mercilessly through the streets," says Lewis Mumford, and he goes on to tell how they were "attacked with daggers of revolt and on occasions made a bonfire of." He brings it all to a point by admitting: "If we wanted to swear hard, we said, 'Babbitt!' 'More!' 'Brownell!' "

Of course such an attitude could not continue indefinitely on the part of those who had some qualities of critical intelligence, and even rather young men are beginning to show a new mood when they speak of the three Olympians.

Mr. W. C. Brownell sees the whole

situation with very clear eyes. He is quite willing to pass a good many wholesome truths on to a generation which has been wildly eager "to be untrammeled and has only succeeded in being unbuttoned." He faces the problems without hesitation in *Standards*. He sees the futility of an art based upon "emotion untouched by morality." He declares emphatically that a democracy must justify itself by producing the aristocratic virtues. He would teach the adventurers to be on guard in the presence of "the conditions inherent in experimentation." He has a good word for age in the presence of youth, for, after all, "how much more crowded are the pigeon holes of age" than those of youth! And how little is achieved by a bustling youthful energy whose net achievement is "a transformation of force into ferocity modified by fatuousness." "So many people who fear the slavery of conventions end by capitulating to the despotism of whim." We must, he feels, be delivered from the reign of "standardless caprice." We must see the folly of "the recoil from disciplined thought." We must find standards. In a significant paragraph in his little book, *Criticism,* Mr. Brownell declares: "But, in general, the criterion that either correctly estimates or successfully contributes to art or letters rests firmly on that eager and luminous view of life and the world which alone furnishes an adequately flexible standard for measuring whatever relates to life and the world and which is furnished by history alone."[1] So Mr. Brownell works patiently and with meticulous and precise care seeking for standards which shall be at once firm and elastic which shall save us from anarchy without reducing us to slavery.

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[1] *Criticism,* by W. C. Brownell, p. 23. Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

The twelve volumes of the *Shelburne Essays,* by Paul Elmer More—we are grateful indeed for the new volume *The Demon of the Absolute*—represent probably the most wide-ranging and comprehensive contribution made to criticism by any writer on this side of the Atlantic. Doctor More has that deep and widely diversified knowledge which Mr. Brownell is sure has such basal significance in sound criticism. He was a professor of Sanscrit—and a scholar before he was a professor—and he knows the brooding quietly insistent insight of the writings which remain from ancient India. He knows Greek literature from those Homeric writings which were the Bible of the Greeks to the Greek anthology. He knows Latin literature. He knows English literature from the rise of the curtain centuries ago to the explosive iconoclasm of the contemporary apostles of the lawless mind. He is not without sound knowledge of European literature, and he sees everything in the terms of long and varied experience and manifold aspects of expression. His standards rise from a long and brooding contemplation of what Matthew Arnold would call the best that has been thought and written in the world. And this vast wisdom makes him a Classicist in full armor ready to do battle for his creed.

Professor Irving Babbitt, in *Rousseau and Romanticism,* has produced one of the few critical masterpieces of our time. The significant French literature is at his finger tips, and it is hard to loosen his grip as you move among the creative masterpieces of the writing of the world. Very firmly he believes in law—one law, to be sure, for the thing and another law for man. Very deeply he distrusts that *élan vital* which is merely the passionate expression of undisciplined feeling.

Yet he knows—none better—the menace of pseudo-classicism with its barren artificiality. He would have vital energy, but it would be energy disciplined and controlled. He would have *"frein vital,"* to use his own searching phrase. He would have vital control. So he leads us in his massive and commanding books to sources of permanent creative art and sources of permanent disciplined strength.

X

We end as we began this lecture with a reference to Paul Valèry. His ideal of l'Homme Universal will haunt the imagination of the man who has once seen it. And we for our part would plead for a universal critic, a critic who would gather together in himself the elements of strength and abjure the elements of weakness in the types which we have been analyzing. It is a flying goal of the critical enterprise we must seek. Ever it eludes us. Ever we must follow it, for the critic must aim at nothing less than the bringing of all significant knowledge to bear upon all potential and actual experience.

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LECTURE V

CRITICISM AND THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

The best sort of artist always has a critic sitting in some corner of his mind. The best sort of critic always has an artist singing in his heart. At low levels of achievement they may dwell quite apart. At the middle levels of activity they may have little to do with each other. But on the heights they meet. At the supreme places they merge. The loftiest art is a criticism of life, and the final criticism glows with creative artistry.

Of course there are often very subtle psychological, not to say psychopathic conditions back of both criticism and art. These conditions are to be uncovered and analyzed and understood.

But both criticism and art stand finally through the inherent qualities of the product and not because of the psychological condition of the critic or the artist. Indeed, a subtle and even abnormal condition of mind may lead to a man's seeing clearly and expressing potently what otherwise he would neither have seen nor expressed. Really powerful minds make the most of all sorts of experiences, and, putting them through the mint, turn them into the currency of the intellectual realm. A little book called *The Golden Complex* was published not so very long ago which showed clearly enough how gifted natures have been able to turn an "inferiority complex" to the most surprising and significant account. It is always a mistake to think that you invalidate an utterance or a criticism or a work of art because the psychological situation out of which it came was involved in confusion or even in tragedy. To be sure, the perception that this is true is no justification for seeking bizarre or abnormal psychological experiences. It does, however, clearly justify the use of the experiences which come one's way for whatsoever they are worth in opening up new vistas of knowledge and understanding. That a man whose whole inner life has been torn by perplexities and grief and the sense of impotence should make all this the basis of creative thought and feeling and expression reveals a certain fineness in the tissue of humanity in which one can only rejoice. In any event the question of final importance is not how a critic or an artist did a certain piece of work. The question is, What is that piece of work worth now that it has been completed?

There seem to be forces which may almost be called biological and which work to produce equilibrium in life when thoughts and emotions and actions have been discordant enough. The escape through mental and æsthetic achievement, the recovery of balance through creative activity, the resolving of tensions through the work of the artist and of the critic too, show us a very fine and opulent nature at work in the processes of bringing good out of evil. There is something in the central force of life itself which is always ready to aid us when we set about turning liabilities into assets.

It seems clear, however, that life reveals its secrets most fully to the man who is all the while bringing his vital experiences to the test of critical appraisal and submitting his critical activity to the refreshing and enriching energies of life itself. Brilliant fragments are very fascinating, but a mosaic in which fragments become parts of a significant and beautiful design is more satisfying. So the synthesis of various methods of dealing with experience in the man who both participates in the vital movement and appraises the currents as he breasts them represents a technique of productive activity which deserves our closest attention. We desire, then, in bringing our discussion of the artist and the critic to a conclusion to think of that high consummation when the artist and the critic are really joined in one commanding personality. And we will venture to use as the example of this achievement that great poet Dante Alighieri.

I

Dante inherited the wealth of many centuries. But he inherited in particular the treasures of one century. And that century was the thirteenth. He was an Italian who loved Virgil almost as he loved his own soul. He was a poet to whom the sheer sweetness of musical words was one of the great joys of life. The soil in which the love songs of southern France had grown was the soil of his own life. Something stern and august had come to it from the moral sanctions of ancient Israel, and from Rome he had learned to think of morality as synonymous with law. Greece had given him a many-roomed house in which to keep his thoughts, and more than a thousand years of Christian history had given him a galaxy of human beings who captured his imagination and haunted his dreams. The beautiful piety which Saint Francis had inspired still moved like a bright fire in Italian blood. The great fabric of the empire was more than a structure built of passionate dreams. Popes and emperors had confronted each other with a sense that they were vehicles of forces mightier than themselves. Something subtle and fair and radiant had been captured by Florence, to bloom in its flowers, to move about its streets in soft summer nights, and to flash in the eyes of its citizens in odd revealing moments. No end of things great and small, beautiful and ugly, good and evil, had found bodies for themselves and moved about the world with decisive energy. It was as if a "pananthropon" among mortals had taken the place of the Pantheon for immortals, and every grace and every passion had a human patron to give it life in the world. So in an age which was vital to the finger tips Dante lived. So in a city which had a response for every thought and every emotion of man Dante grew up. There were always invisible fingers reaching after his mind, his conscience, and his heart, tugging and pulling and drawing him in every direction. Florence became incarnate in Dante.

But in the midst of all this variety the thirteenth century had achieved a singular and notable unity in its sense of the meaning of the mighty pageant. When Innocent III had shown what a king of kings a Pope could be; when Saint Francis had turned piety into a passionate love song which men sang as they went about serving the world as Jesus himself would have served it, and loving men and women, the lowest and the worst of them with a love like unto his; when men had read the words of Aristotle until they built great frames for the thoughts which tell the tale of life and God and destiny; when Saint Thomas had turned Aristotle into a Christian theologian, making his thought forms the vehicle of a reasoned setting forth of the Christian interpretation of life, the world began to have a feeling of unity far enough from anything which we can easily imagine to-day. It was a world where a critic had a great set of sanctions waiting for his hand. It was a world where an artist had a wealth of experience waiting for his use.

II

An old family of Florence gave Dante the world. Sensitive, proud, passionate, penetrating of mind, with a lonely and magnificent consciousness of power, he passed through the years of childhood. Perhaps his emotional precocity was more remarkable even than his intellectual power. Before he had reached his tenth year Beatrice had struck him dumb with discerning emotions which seemed to bind heaven and earth in the slight exquisite face and form of one lovely girl. Perhaps just because the experience came before all the storm and stress and rebellious energy of adolescence it was characterized by a subtle spiritual grace whose light, airy beauty fell with undeniable power over all his later years. Legendary lore gathers about a figure like that of Dante. His simple, unhesitating action in a crisis, his courage in battle, his sternly proud assurance, his utter preoccupation when a book seized his eye, have come down through centuries enshrined in effective tales. What is clear is that he lived with his mind in the very citadel of the intellect of the age. The story of his astonishing performance at Paris is expressive of the tradition of his intellectual power even if the story itself is without historic foundation. It is also clear that he lived at the heart of the emotional life of his age. It is clear that though a layman he mastered the theology of that acute and vital period. The politics of the age represented ideas which almost became persons as they contended in his mind. Guelph and Ghibelline meant heartbeats, and strong arms and straight fighting eyes and the shedding of blood. The empire tugged at his mind and heart and so he poured his thoughts into the monumental work *De Monarchia.* Everything which was alive in the time was alive in Dante. As the hundred years came to an end you might have pointed at Dante, saying, "There goes the thirteenth century." The unity which the age had achieved in the piety of Saint Thomas, the state craft of Innocent Third, and the Summa of Saint Thomas had somehow become a passion of synthesis in Dante's mind. And he organized the experiences of tangled and confused centuries into a coherent and harmonious interpretation in his own thought.

III

Perhaps the fundamentally important thing about Dante is that he built the structure of his thought about a great acceptance rather than an angry revolt. You can be brilliant if you stand the thoughts of all your contemporaries on their heads. But it is brilliancy in a chaos and not brilliancy in an ordered universe. In his own way Dante could flame with intense and sharply clear thought. But he sees perhaps instinctively that he must have a universe and not a multiverse for his own powerful process of singing dialectic. So he accepted gladly and gratefully enough the great philosophic frame which Aristotle gave to him. Perhaps no more brilliant master of the meaning and the technique of classification ever lived than this same Aristotle, who was the real schoolmaster of the Middle Ages. He gave to Dante as he had given to Thomas Aquinas hooks upon which to hang everything. There was plenty of room left for observation, for classification, for integration. But Aristotle gave you a sort of major premise upon which you could depend. The trouble with a good deal of mental activity in our time is just that it has no major premise. Dante instinctively appropriated the philosophical sanctions which would give him a secure and dependable place to work. Perhaps it is not too much to say that with his type of mind if he had not found a coherent well-organized philosophy waiting for his use, he would have invented one. He was not the sort of person who could be contented with a literary output which represented emotional adventures in chaos. Mr. H. G. Wells, who has scarcely heard of Dante, almost wistfully pleads for a common body of knowledge and assumptions on the part of civilized men. You cannot stabilize life without a "common for all." In this Mr. Wells gropes about in his clever way, so efficient in small things, so futile in really great ones. Dante and his period had a "common for all" in Aristotle as the Middle Ages knew him. We begin to see that in a far-reaching sense it was possible for him to be a critic just because he had a great body of standards with which to work.

IV

If the principles were philosophical, the immediate matter was political. One had to live in an actual world. And that world would respond in a measure at least to one's conception of the sort of organization it ought to have. The empire might be a kind of ghost, but it was a powerful ghost. And there was a possibility that it might become a spirit dominating that body which was the whole western world. So ever it had been in the great days of Rome. So it had appeared for a moment as the light fell on the face of Charlemagne. So the great political leaders of the German Empire dreamed that it might be again, but you needed more than Othos and

Frederick Barbarossa and the soldiers who followed them. The idea must capture men's minds. So Dante lifted his pen for the writing of *De Monarchia.* There was one world. There was one empire. There were two swords. The Pope wielded the sword of the Spirit. The Emperor wielded the secular sword. Together they were to rule the world. In the whole conception one sees that passion for order and solidarity, for strength and the harmony of integration which in the field of pure intellect dominated the mind of Dante. Only now he would apply it to the political world. He simply must have standards. It is scarcely too much to say that he must have an empire of the mind whether or not there is an actual empire. He is a critic who knows that there is no permanent criticism without standards. But he is also a political thinker who knows that there is no safety without solidarity. He knew what Italy had suffered because of the lack of it. He wanted not only a united Italy but a united world. He recognized the dangers inherent in the complicated mechanism in which he believed. The Pope, for instance, might want to play emperor. So deeply did he feel this that although his family tradition was that of the Guelphs and their support of the Pope, he became essentially a Ghibelline who expected everything in the way of political order and harmony for the world to come from a just and powerful emperor. In the days when China suffers because of lack of coherent organization and Italy is trusting in Mussolini in sheer distrust of democracy, we can realize with a fresh sense of actuality how fundamental were the problems with which he was dealing. But what most concerns us now is that habit of mind which depended upon order in fundamental philosophical principles and order in the actual world. His clearly realized and sharply visualized conceptions gave him the standards which made great criticism possible. If you do not have principles which you trust implicitly, criticism becomes a will of the wisp.

V

The world of religion was also to Dante a world which was completely charted. As he owed to Aristotle the house in which he lived as a philosopher, so he owed to Thomas Aquinas the house in which he lived as a theologian. Abelard's *Sic et Non* had seemed the work of an apostle of unrest. Peter Lombard's *Sentences* had meant the emerging of some sort of order in the chaos of opinion. And Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa* had used the very methods of the *Sic et Non* for the purposes of theological order and unity and solidarity. He said what could be said on each side of every question he discussed. Then he moved on to his own great positions. Dante was not tempted to revolt or impatience by the completeness of the solutions of Saint Thomas. He did not cry, "Oh that this too, too solid argument would melt!" Rather he rejoiced in the dependableness of the sanctions which made his own brilliant and far-reaching work possible. As a matter of fact, even to-day it might be good for us to realize that a well-built roadbed, ties firmly laid and rails which hold their places with indubitable certainty are very good indeed for trains of thought. It is an odd type of mind which tears up the rails and tosses the ties about and destroys the roadbed and then expects the express train of its thought to reach some grand terminal traveling at sixty miles an hour. The most singular fact about the thought of our time is its distrust of major premises. This is not to deny the possibility of new and better roadbeds. It is surely to insist that transit for the mind as for the body depends upon a well-built system to which you can give some sort of assured confidence.

So Dante was interested in traveling upon roads which had been securely built. He wanted to use his materials and not to destroy them. The sanctions in respect of God and Christ, of men and life and destiny, which Saint Thomas had organized so brilliantly, gave him standards which could be applied in ever fresh and brilliant ways. He added his theological structure to his political structure and his philosophical structure. And they all fitted together in one splendid architectural scheme.

It is not difficult to see that all this was of inestimable value for a critical mind. He did not see things in a vacuum. He saw men and things against the background of a well-considered and well-ordered view of life. Mr. T. S. Eliot, in his able little book on Dante, has called attention to the fact that it is possible to enter with sympathetic understanding into a point of view which we do not personally share. This is notably true. And it is imperatively necessary if we would understand Dante. But deeper than this friendly apprehension of a series of views which we do not share is a comprehension of Dante's profound insight that only on the basis of settled and accepted sanctions can you build a great criticism of life. Otherwise you make a mental anarchy and call it intellectual peace.

VI

But we have not yet exhausted the areas of organized certainty in Dante's mind. His sense of moral sanctions was simple and clear and secure. Before the days of Kant he appreciated the splendors of the moral law. The history of Israel, the history of Rome, and the history of the Christian religion for more than a thousand years could be likened to a series of rivers flowing together at last. And these rivers brought a great deposit of moral sanctions to the lives of contemporary men. This crystallized moral experience of the richest ethical life of the race was an inheritance which Dante received with a kind of noble honesty. It brought him face to face with sanctions which revealed his own moral inadequacy, which gave sad blows to his pride, and which brought personal humiliation to one of the proudest of men. But, like the soldier of conscience he was, he went forward with unshaken loyalty. He belonged to that great company of moral heroes who would rather be condemned by a great and noble code than to taste the make-believe emancipation of a lawless world. The moral voice was always speaking in his mind. It was high and august and authoritative. A man of his type can never be contented except when following the flag of conscience. If he did not live in a world with moral laws, he would find it necessary to invent them. So he added to his philosophy and his politics and his theology his ethics. Regal standards lifted their bright banners in every part of his mind. He was an eager expert in loyalties. He had actually come to understand that only by the possession of standards can you have a free world.

If all this gave a certain grimness to life, it was grimness with a great light upon it. The mountains of Dante were based in granite. But they rose clearly and nobly against the sky. They gathered the beauty of countless dawns and the purple of ever-returning sun-sets. And their air was pure with the strange and bracing purity of the heights.

VII

To Dante the world of beauty was also a very real and a very profound experience. His race and his city and his age and his own temper poured exquisite dreams into his very sleeping hours and filled his days with quests for harmony and pursuits of loveliness. How free he was for all his sense of standards, rather how free he was because his mind was firmly set in loyalty to really commanding sanctions, we can see as we watch him moving about in his world of beauty. It was not an artificial mind which deliberately chose the Italian speech as the vehicle for a loveliness it had never known, and wrote a brilliant critical work to defend the choice, and literally made the Italian speech by his use of it in noble artistry. The grace and the soft and exquisite tenderness of words which have been taught to sing readily responded at his command. The laws of beauty he wore not like chains, but like the jewels in a royal crown. And so to his insights as a thinker about philosophy and politics and theology and ethics he added the sure and effective insights of his thought about beauty when words are bent to its purposes. But he did more. He turned his criticism into art when he created a literary masterpiece of which we may say that only the ages offer a sufficient perspective to reveal its greatness. As a critical thinker whose thoughts could burn with creative fire he became a supreme poet.

There is something almost overwhelming about the picture which Dante brings before us of a completely disciplined mind armed with full equipment of stalwart standards and bringing all these resources to the purposes of artistic creation. We must admit that the age was waiting for such a man. But with what astonishing felicity and power the man mastered and used the materials which the age offered! He became a scholar. He became a philosopher. He became a political thinker. He became a theologian. He became an ethical thinker. He became an interpreter of the principles of æsthetics. And then he set all this mass of technical material to music. He taught scholarship and philosophy and politics and ethics how to express themselves in lyrical rapture. His very æsthetic principles he turned into melody. So he created *The Divine Comedy*.

VIII

One thing must not be forgotten. That is Dante's personal experience. He did not live a cloistered life remote from the storms and alarms of the turbulent world. He entered into the political life of his city. He made friends. He made enemies. He was exiled. He tasted the bitter fruit of an exile's life. He bent his proud spirit to receive the courteous support of friendly princes. We know how much it cost him to sit at the tables of other men, and to stand in their presence as the recipient of their favor. After he was exiled he never saw Florence, and in spite of all his sense of injustice he refused to receive the poet's crown at the hands of any other city. He suffered as only a very sensitive man can suffer. He drank the cup of loneliness to its dregs. And out of bitter and passionate pain he wrought the subtly responsive qualities of a personality which could let life flow over it as a river moves on its bed, and so could feel every powerful pressure of the waters above. He could suffer vicariously because he had suffered personally. A man of easy and constant and opulent success, whatever his genius, could never have written *The Divine Comedy*. Only lives which have tasted tragedy give some gifts to the world.

You must have thought for yourself in order to be able with complete understanding to think the thoughts of others. You must have felt deeply yourself in order to apprehend the flame and the sting of the passion of others. You must have turned thought into vigorous action in order to have the swift understanding of the actions of others. Dante had lived fully, intensely, and passionately. And so he had added the last element of his preparation for the interpretation of life.

IX

The great critical thinker and the

creative artist was ready for his task. At middle life, when the idealisms of youth have waned and the body speaks the loudest and one must find profound and permanent sources of moral and spiritual strength if he is to escape from the temptation to make the great surrender, Dante made his journey through Hell and Purgatory and Heaven. That human love which had been refined to one clear ray of heavenly passion inspired the journey. And Beatrice, who is both a lover's dream and the fulfillment of the hopes of youth made resplendent by celestial passion, is never far from the thought of Dante or his readers. Loyal humanist that he was, he found a way to express that noble devotion. The great poet Virgil was his guide through Hell and Purgatory. Human wisdom at its ripest and best, trailing its own memories of beauty, was with him until he was ready to meet the heavenly wisdom shining brightly in dear human eyes.

There is nothing vague about Dante's Hell. You feel that he might have gone through it with surveyor's instruments—so thoroughly does he know it. As he moves through its nine circles he sees everything with eyes sharp and clear-sighted, even if sometimes drawn with terror. He meets the sinners of all the ages and he watches their bearing as they experience their doom. He sees those colorless people not bad enough for Hell, not promising enough for Purgatory, and not good enough for Heaven. They are forever blown about by the winds without dwelling place, without any quality of actually significant life. Even in suffering they are colorless and without character. He sees the painless deprivation of great men who are in Hell only in the sense that they have no hope of Heaven. The gray quiet of Christless lives is theirs, the dignity of human nature unlifted by the divine grace. He sees the company of those whose insistent bodies proved stronger than their spirits, who enthroned appetite and dethroned reason. Driven by an infernal hurricane, their passion inflicts its own eternal pain. You feel as if Dante's own heart is breaking as he tells the tale of Paola and Francesca, who read no more after one strange intense hour when the tale of the passion of Lancelot was like a seed growing wildly and bringing sudden harvest in their lives. The poet sees the gluttonous with the terrible rain falling upon them. He sees the avaricious and the prodigal, the avaricious who had hoarded, the prodigal who have thoughtlessly cast treasures away perpetually rolling weights which are too much for them. He sees the wrathful tearing each other to pieces or under the water, quite submerged, with only queer bubbles coming to the surface to tell of their presence. Deeper in Hell, with various scenes of dolorous terror, he finds those who had despised the truth. Punishments in their own terrible way express the quality of the lie which was chosen instead of the truth of God. Proceeding, he sees the violent. He beholds sinners suffering in a river of boiling blood. He sees the punishment of suicides who despised the bodies God had given them and find a strange dolorous dwelling in the branches of bushes and in the trunks of trees. Those who have done violence to God move about on burning sand while flashes of fire fall upon them. Those who have done violence to nature and those who have done violence to art meet their fitting doom. Lower yet in Hell are the fraudulent, the panderers and seducers and false flatterers. Horned demons with great whips beat cruelly some of these. In utter and incredible filth some make their hideous abode. The simonists have their own place, Pope Nicholas III among them; corrupt officials dwell in burning pitch and are thrown back if they crawl out. Hypocrites wear cloaks of brilliant look but made of heavy lead. Thieves are tormented by serpents. Men whose words were fraudulent and sowers of discord find their bitter fate. Every sort of liar has his own doom. Traitors are in the ninth circle of Hell, and at its lowest spot is Lucifer frozen in ice. Dante exhausts the power of a mind full of strangely ingenious understanding in providing punishments which somehow embody the very genius of the crime. There is every sort of physical loathsomeness and horror. But the spiritual horror is deeper and darker and more desperate. Dante's Hell is really a study of the nature and quality of evil. He removes all the bright and alluring garments which hide its hideousness from our eyes, and we see sin in its true nature. The real tragedy of all these people lies not in where they are, but in what they are. The rich and mighty and powerful are there, great princes and great ecclesiastics taste the moral quality of their great transgressions made permanent as their doom. Their ultimate punishment is just that they will never be able to cease being themselves. Sometimes there is a flash of strange sympathy, as when Dante looks upon a figure who even in Hell bears himself as one who had won rather than as one who had lost. But, on the whole, just because you are seeing unrelieved evil in its own nature, there is the sense of ultimate frustration with no relieving grace or gleam of nobility to lessen the abysmal completeness of the gloom. Dante converses with these people. In an astonishing way he reproduces the very quality of their experience. You see in a flash the life out of which they came and perhaps the moment when they chose darkness rather than light. Evil has here reached its ultimate and undisguised expression. And it is with perfect genius that at its very worst Dante finds Lucifer at the bottom of Hell held in masses of ice. The last scene is complete and eternal cold.

It is clear enough that to Dante evil itself becomes fate. Punishment is not a thing arbitrarily brought to a man's life. It is the very nature of the man become a tyrant which holds him in its remorseless clutches. You feel as you complete the journey with Dante the meaning of strangely understanding words spoken once by a man with his own spiritual genius: "Men do not go to Hell. They become Hell."

X

For sheer agony the suffering in

Purgatory may be compared with the suffering in Hell, and even so compared it seems dreadful enough. But there are great differences. Hell is suffering which leads to no door of release. It is suffering without moral expectation. It is suffering without spiritual anticipation. But in Purgatory suffering, however terrible, is always on the way to something else. Purgatory is suffering with hope in its heart. Now and again, the mountain of Purgatory fairly rocks with song as another spirit passes on to the great felicity. Purgatory is the halfway house of the expectant spirit. Hell is the bitter home of the spirit which has no hope of being other than it is. With unerring insight Dante finds the disciplines of Purgatory to be suited to the moral healing of the particular classes of people whom he is describing as he moves from ledge to ledge. Evil has scarred their lives and has played sad havoc with their careers, but a central seed of reality and truth remains. Now the weeds are to be taken out and this seed of goodness is to have its chance to grow. Virgil walks through it all a strangely impressive figure. He is among people who have a future. He has only a past.

Dante's Purgatory is really a superbly adequate study of the psychology of discipline. It is the sort of thing which happens about us every day as men give a meaning to pain by making it serve a noble moral and spiritual purpose. Men can endure very terrible things if they are sure that something of high value and definite worth is to come out of it all. Meaningless and futile suffering breaks men on the wheel of its own cruelty. But suffering which is on the way to a great consummation itself becomes transfigured by the borrowed light of the gladness which is yet to be.

The conception of experience as discipline is one of the most fruitful of the insights which have been given to the mind of man. And this is the very bedrock upon which the mount of Purgatory rests. The sense that spirits full of dauntless hope and joyous expectation are being prepared for experiences of radiant felicity is with you all the while. The mountain is a mighty mother passing through perpetual pangs of birth and bringing forth joy after joy for the enrichment of the gladness of the universe.

There is a brave optimism which moves all through the pages of Purgatory. And courage is required. When Dante comes to his own experience of cleansing you almost feel the heat of the fire which burns him. No make-believe discipline solves the problems of semi-somnolent souls. Bitter, ugly facts are seen in their gritty hardness. But they are not inscrutable. For out of all the passionate pain comes life everlasting.

The mood of the Purgatory is one which rescues gladness at the very point of the sword. It is completely honest. It does not tell lies for the sake of comfort. But when it has faced the final ugly and bitter fact it comes to see beyond it the triumphant love of God.

The higher you ascend the nearer comes the great joy. And at last the wonder of the earthly Paradise is spread out before you. Discipline has done its work and there is an hour of perfect peace, with the loveliness of color and the beauty of song and the graciousness of happy fellowship all about you.

XI

Then there is the beatific consummation. It is very dangerous to write about heaven. Most men only achieve an anti-climax. You have a suspicion that the heavenly life as they picture it would be incredibly dull. But Dante's dream really rises to the heights of the great argument. First of all it is amazingly human. Beatrice is a symbolic figure representing the joy of personal apprehension of the truth of God. But she is also a human being refined to all the height of beatific joy—yet always with something which was the grace of a lovely child in Florence many years ago. So something from the banks of the Arno gives a final touch of authenticity to the heavenly city.

Then the very robustness of the faith that the final truths of the universe are only properly expressed in lyrical and melodious speech, brings to our minds the thought of a consummation when the reason at its brightest burns with all the passion of transcendent emotion. Somehow you suddenly find that to have the body on fire with physical passion is a small and futile thing. Ashes and decay lie beyond every jet of flame of which the body is capable. But a mind on fire with the ultimate truths of the universe is a conception not unworthy of the life celestial.

Then to Dante heaven is not the repudiation of passion. It is the transfiguration of passion. The old lusts may well fall away in the presence of that spiritual fire which burns forever. Such harmony, such ceaseless motion of beatific rapture, such burning beauty as have not entered the heart of man, make heaven a perfect fulfillment of those dim prophecies which spoke in our hearts when first we learned to love. All of this is purer than gold refined in many fires. It is the eternal reality of which lust is only a travesty and a counterfeit.

And when you come to that rose of

love and fire which is Dante's symbol of the great and final and beatific felicity, you have the ultimate elements of experience lifted to their highest power in the life man lives with God forever. There is perfect bloom. There is perfect beauty. There is perfect love. There is ceaseless activity. Thought itself has become rapture. Obedience is free felicity. God's will is men's peace. And in this law which is love and love which is law, we see the secret of the movement of the sun and all the other stars.

XII

Confronted by this supreme achievement of integration of the critical and the artistic impulses, we are likely to be left breathless. As Dante causes the voices of all the ages to become articulate in Hell and Purgatory and Heaven, as the pageant of thought and feeling and activity passes before us, and as we confront at last in the presence of a unified world—a universe indeed—the achievement of a harmony beyond our loveliest dreams, we stand in humility before the spirit capable of such creative activity.

Then as the spell begins to pass we rise in our own defense. Dante lived in a unified world. We live in a world all breaking apart. Dante lived in a world of one commanding philosophy. We live in a world whose contending philosophies leap at each other in clenched antagonism. Dante lived in a world with a great political ideal. We live in a world of confused and bewildered political thought, where old passwords have died and new ones have not been born. Dante lived in a world of one triumphant theology. We live in a world where theology lies dead at our feet. Dante lived in a world which knew what it meant by beauty. We live in a world where beauty moves dimly among ideas each made up of elements which contradict each other and desires which cannot be reconciled.

We cannot go back to Dante. On every page we find standards we cannot accept, assumptions we must question, sanctions whose right we must deny. In fact, we may be inclined to say, there can be no creative artist in our day who with critical acumen bends all the varieties of knowledge and insight to his own artistic purpose. The day of supreme achievements in synthesis we are tempted to say is past. So we stand a bit sadly and wistfully in the presence of an achievement possible only to a dweller on heights which we can never climb.

—And yet! When we toss away the husk and keep the kernel, it is remarkable how much even of Dante is seen to be permanent. And when we come to the deeper matters of the passion for synthesis, the quest for standards, the endless pursuit of an organic conception of the world and life and experience, suddenly doubt vanishes, the hero sleeping in our minds wakes and speaks, and we turn toward the trails which lead to the mountain heights.

However long and toilsome the way, we too will climb to the heights named World View. We too will bend all knowledge in all fields to our purpose. We too will find sanctions stalwart and high. We too will become masters in the use of critical intelligence. We too will suffuse the critical mind with the artist's passion. And when enough of us have committed ourselves to the great endeavor, when we have accepted its disciplines and made our own its tasks, the day will come when from our loins will rise the artist in whose critical mind the thoughts of these modern ages will find unity and peace.

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